

Multi-dimensional personhood and the welfare state

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November 2019

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Philosophy.

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Abstract

The welfare state in Britain has been a subject of much ecclesiastical and pastoral concern since (before) its inception, but this interest has not been matched by any comparable and sustained theological engagement. This thesis seeks to redress this by drawing on the thought of William Temple, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Rowan Williams to articulate a theologically-nuanced understanding of the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare. Drawing on the work of Gøsta Esping-Anderson, Raymond Plant and Alan Deacon in the introductory chapter, the thesis explains the justification for a normative approach to the welfare state that grounds itself in anthropological considerations. It then proceeds to analyse the theological anthropology of each of the four thinkers in question and to explore how these have informed and shaped each's theology of the state vis-à-vis the provision of 'welfare'. It argues that – contrary to the few theologically-informed analyses discussed in the introductory chapter that have engaged with this anthropological approach to welfare but have done so on an inadequate, unidimensional understanding of the person – a serious theological engagement with welfare will recognise and seek to honour a *multi-dimensional* understanding of human personhood. Thus, a theological understanding of human persons will recognise their created, material, agential, sinful, relational, transcendent, and creative nature, as well, in particular, as their ultimate orientation to, and fulfilment by, gift. These aspects of human personhood must be taken into consideration when determining welfare state policy, and the final chapter sets out why and how this can be done. Returning to the work of Deacon, Plant and Esping-Anderson, it argues that a multi-dimensionality needs to be incorporated into welfare state thinking as means of determining the range and nature of the “contestable social concepts” that lie behind thinking on welfare, and as a way of engaging with but problematizing the idea of welfare regimes, popularised by Esping-Anderson. It concludes by outlining a constructive response to the welfare state, by drawing on the various dimensions of human personhood to inform four ‘dimensions’ of the welfare state, namely work, participation, funding, and creativity in the design and delivery of services.

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1: Introduction: The Welfare State, theology and anthropology: background, methodology and subjects

The Church and the Welfare State

This thesis speaks into the debate about the future of the British welfare state, by outlining the need and potential for, and significance and implications of, a theologically-informed anthropology. It draws on the thought of William Temple, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Rowan Williams, analysing and exploring the connections between their theological anthropology and conceptualisation of the proper function of the (welfare) state. It uses this work to delineate a multi-dimensional concept of the person, and explore the consequences this has for the foundation, funding, structure, and ethos of welfare provision. In doing this, the thesis offers an original contribution to a still rather thin tradition of critical theological engagement with the welfare state.

“Seen within the history of Western civilization, the present-day welfare state can be understood as the long-term heir to the early Christian church.”¹ Charles Taylor’s remark, made towards the end of *A Secular Age*, underlines the deep connection between church and welfare state, a connection that is particularly clear in recent British history. “*Christianity and Social Order... provided the Christian undergirding of the Beveridge Report*”, wrote Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, in the preface to his volume of essays *On Rock or Sand: Firm Foundations for Britain’s Future*.² William Temple was “a perfect exemplar of the descent of New Jerusalemism from the religious expression of the romantic movement”, wrote Corelli Barnett, rather less appreciatively, in *The Audit of War*.³

In reality, the link between church and welfare state in Britain both pre- and post-dates Temple’s much-mythologised role as godfather to the Beveridge report. Although almost entirely ignored by Chris Renwick in his history of the origins of the welfare state,⁴ the churches played an important role in generating the conditions for the state’s assumption of welfare services in the twentieth century, and sometimes in generating key ideas also.⁵ It was a clergyman, the Revd William Blackley, who first advocated the idea of National Insurance in an article published in 1878, a plan that was then subject of a House of Commons Select Committee inquiry from 1885 to 1887.⁶ When Archbishop Frederick Temple addressed a deputation of trades’ societies in 1900 he affirmed a scheme proposed

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by Charles Booth that the state should pay a pension of five shillings a week to everyone over the age of sixty-five.⁷ The connections between the nascent Labour Party and the nonconformist churches are well-charted,⁸ as is the link between nonconformity and the New Liberalism at the turn of the century.⁹ “The permeation of the leadership of the Church of England by the ideals and attitudes previously largely confined to the enthusiasts of the Christian Social Union” during the first two decades of the 20th century was, according to Edward Norman, “truly remarkable.”¹⁰

As before Temple, so after. “In no nobler or more effective way will the historic connection between Church and State be continued than by the readiness of Churchmen and Churchwomen to give paid or voluntary service to social work under the control of the State,” wrote Cyril Garbett, Archbishop of York, in his 1950 book, *Church and State in England*.¹¹ Thirty years later, *Faith in the City* emphasised “the repeated New Testament call to “share one another’s burdens”, which it argued, ‘authorize[d]’ the Church ‘to challenge the [Thatcherite] slogan of “efficiency”, when it came to the reform of public services.¹² Thirty years later again, on 19 February 2014, 43 Christian leaders wrote to the *Daily Mirror* newspaper criticising the coalition government’s welfare reforms, their intervention framed as pastorally-driven, despite the fact that normative political considerations lurked not far under the surface.¹³

Not all of this interest in the welfare state, it should be noted, has been uncritically appreciative. Temple, as we shall note in chapter 1 below, sounded warning notes about the state’s assumption of responsibilities that were traditionally the Church’s. Garbett remarked in a speech to the House of Lords in 1956 that to make the welfare state spiritually and economically viable “every citizen must develop a sense of responsibility superior...to that required under any other society that has ever existed.”¹⁴ Margaret Thatcher deployed the parable of the Good Samaritan as argument against state welfare provision,¹⁵ and more recently the Catholic political economist Philip Booth has edited two editions of a collection entitled *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy*, which has articulated a theologically-grounded and economically-literate argument against extensive state welfare provision.¹⁶

The reasons for the ecclesiastical interest in the welfare state are abundant. Prior to the Forster Act of 1870 and National Insurance Act of 1911, the responsibility for educating, clothing, feeding, visiting, insuring, and even housing and healing fell disproportionately on

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the churches, discharged through a vast range of charitable associations that had a greater or lesser Christian inspiration.¹⁷ Christian involvement in such areas remains immense today, the recent expansion of food banks being only the most prominent example of this.¹⁸

The simple fact that much (though not all) welfare spending is targeted at those who are at a needy and vulnerable moment of their life – children, elderly, ill, unemployed, homeless – and who may not have an immediate network of support around them has a deep biblical resonance. Many of the ‘subjects’ of the welfare state are, in effect, the modern equivalent of the Old Testament’s oft-mention quartet of the economically-dependent: widows, orphans, aliens, and poor. Churches across the country have regular and frequent pastoral dealings with those who receive and sometimes depend on welfare. As a result, any state retrenchment in these areas is often felt viscerally, which itself informs the nature of the Christian response to political reform and the proper function of the state.

Beyond these reasons, there is a broader reason for the Church’s interest. Recent years have heard various calls to “roll back the state” to its core or essential functions (whatever they are) or to “fix government”.¹⁹ Historically, the question of the limits, legitimacy and function of the state has been one to which Christian thought has paid considerable attention.²⁰ For all that the proper function of the state remains a wider issue than that of welfare alone, and for all that issues of the welfare can be profoundly technocratic, a considered Christian engagement with the welfare state is part of the longstanding Christian contribution to the wider question of the role of the state, and what that means for the Church.

Alongside the mainstream thesis that secularisation is as a result of modernisation, and the newer “economistic” thesis that sees secularisation as the result of a lack of ‘free market’ in religious ideas and beliefs, a number of scholars have posited what they call a “governmental” or “state” thesis, in which the bigger the state, and especially the more extensive its provision of welfare, the smaller space there is for religion. Anthony Gill and Erik Lundsgaarde have tested this thesis empirically, finding that

“there is a strong statistical relationship between state social welfare spending and religious participation and religiosity. Countries with higher levels of per capita welfare have a proclivity for less religious participation and tend to have higher percentages of non-religious individuals. People living in countries with high social

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welfare spending per capita even have less of a tendency to take comfort in religion, perhaps knowing that the state is there to help them in times of crisis.”²¹

To quote this finding is not to endorse it, but rather to underline how there are significant sociological reasons, in addition to the historical and pastoral ones, for the ecclesiastical interest in the welfare state.

The need for *theological* reflection on the welfare state

Given these historical, pastoral and sociological connections between the church and the welfare state, there has been relatively little serious *theological* engagement with the question of the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare.

The subject has not been ignored by the churches. Indeed, the Church of England’s engagement has been consistent since *Faith in the City*.²² This was quickly followed by *Not Just for the Poor: Christian Perspectives on the Welfare State*,²³ since which the Board of Social Responsibility and then the Mission and Public Affairs Division have periodically returned to the issue.²⁴

Roman Catholic interventions have been less frequent and less focused on the specific question of welfare. The 1996 publication *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching* made only two references to the welfare state, although its concern with “welfare” was much wider than that figure suggests.²⁵ Subsequent interventions – *Vote for the Common Good* (2001), *Choosing the Common Good* (2010) and the Conference’s General Election Letter of 2015 – were less substantial, all avoiding direct engagement with the welfare state. Both Churches used the Big Society agenda, which flourished between 2009 and 2012 to reflect in an *ad hoc* way on the question of welfare, the Church of England publishing various papers for synod²⁶ and the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales exploring the consonance between the Big Society and Catholic Social Teaching.²⁷

Beyond these two major denominations, there has been a host of other published interventions, such as from the Joint Public Issues Team²⁸, the Church Urban Fund,²⁹ the St Paul’s Institute,³⁰ William Temple Foundation,³¹ the von Hügel Institute,³² the Centre for Enterprise, Markets and Ethics,³³ and Theos.³⁴ In addition to these we might add the range of high profile media interventions made by different church leaders, such as the aforementioned letter to the *Daily Mirror*³⁵ or Cardinal Vincent Nichols’ remarks to the *Daily*

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Telegraph on the same theme, at the same time, making the same point.³⁶ In short, the subject has certainly not been *ignored* by British churches.

That recognised, the problem with these interventions is that they have mostly been reactive, motivated by pressing pastoral or immediate ‘political’ concerns rather than any more considered theological reasoning, the result being that they have tended to comprise one part theology to four parts sociology, economics or political science.

Thus, *Faith and the City* was a specific response to the urban disaffection of the early 1980s, but, for all its impact and thoroughness, had 23 pages of theology out of nearly 400.³⁷ *Not Just for the Poor* achieved a slightly better balance (18 pages out of 140), its chapter on ‘Welfare in the Light of Christian belief’ highlighting five theological categories as a framework for analysis.³⁸ Political interventions from the Catholic Bishops Conference have reliably drawn on a well-developed conceptual framework exemplified by the ‘Common Good’ of each title, but, as noted, have never developed this in relation to thinking about the welfare state. *The Challenge of Social Welfare*, from the Centre for Enterprise, Markets and Ethics contained a chapter by Brian Griffiths, exploring “A welfare society”, and brief reflections on the topic from the other three contributors. Theos’ *The Future of Welfare* boasted only a handful of essays that were theological.³⁹

The von Hügel Institute’s 2008 report *Moral, But No Compass* was subtitled “Government, Church and the Future of Welfare” but focused primarily on the current and potential involvement of the Church of England with “welfare reform, voluntary activity and public service delivery,”⁴⁰ and explained in its methodology that it had not “been possible to develop a full theological exposition of all of the questions at stake”, and that “deeper theological explorations [would] be featured in subsequent phases of our work”, which were, it seems, never completed.⁴¹ The Institute’s later, independent study into Catholic Social Teaching and the Big Society was not focused specifically on the Welfare State but did examine whether and which principles of CST were embodied in the Big Society idea, and how that informed conceptualisations of the welfare state. Its theological reflection was limited (11 pages out of 65) but helpful in as far as it highlighted the foundational anthropological issues that lay deep beneath the political debate, and that are central to this thesis.

One of the reasons for the brevity and paucity of this institutional theological engagement with the nature of the Welfare State, is that academic theological reflection has been no

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richer. Duncan Forrester published *Christianity and the Future of Welfare* in 1985, though at 107 pages this was brief and rather more historical and political than it was theological.⁴² His more substantial academic work, such as *Christian Justice and Public Policy* does not engage directly with the question of the welfare state.⁴³

More recently, Anglican theologian Mark Chapman engaged in questions of welfare in his *Blair's Britain: A Christian Critique* and *Doing God: Religion and Public Policy in Brown's Britain*, though again at limited length.⁴⁴ In the run up to the 2015 General Election, *On Rock and Sand*,⁴⁵ a volume of essays exploring “firm foundations for Britain’s future” edited by John Sentamu included major academic contributors, both economic (Andrew Sentance) and theological (Oliver O’Donovan), but wrapped up its analysis of the welfare state in a wider context of analysis.

The previous year, Malcolm Brown edited a volume on Anglican Social Theology (AST)⁴⁶ which drew on “the Temple Tradition” (Alan Suggate’s chapter), as well as looking at the move ‘post-Temple’ (John Hughes’ chapter), and compared and integrated evangelical and Catholic perspectives (Jonathan Chaplin and Anna Rowlands respectively). Issues of welfare were relevant here, but only as part of the wider picture of Anglican Social Theology.

Oliver O’Donovan did not engage directly with the question of welfare in *The Ways of Judgement* except in so far as identifying welfare provision – alongside the other functions of government, such as “lawmaking, war-making ... [and] education” – as within the purview of his conceptualisation of government as judgement.⁴⁷ However, his understanding of the “authority” of secular government as residing in the act of “judgement”, of its task as “repelling whatever obstructs our acting freely together”, and of political authority as having no “special mandate” to pursue the common good conceived as a kind of “giant millennium dome”, elevated above the more local and immediate common goods of “*societas humana*”, are both relevant to the theme of this thesis, consonant with its conclusions.⁴⁸

Jonathan Chaplin and Anna Rowlands also both contributed to the volume *Together for the Common Good: Towards a National Conversation* (as did Malcolm Brown).⁴⁹ This touched on the welfare state but in the broader context of the ‘common good’ in contemporary Britain. John Atherton, Christopher Baker and John Reader looked at the issue of welfare in the fourth chapter or their *Christianity and the New Social Order*, locating it in wider debates around well-being and, importantly, theological anthropology.⁵⁰ Sam Wells’ *A Nazareth*

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Manifesto focused primarily on social engagement rather than the function of the welfare state, although the book's repeated emphasis on working *alongside* and *with* rather than *to* or *for* those in need resonates with one of the conclusions of this thesis.⁵¹ Luke Bretherton, John Milbank and Adrian Pabst have each (the last two in partnership) contributed substantial volumes of political theology in recent years, which have touched on questions of welfare, and which are referenced in the concluding chapter of this thesis.⁵² Perhaps the most substantial 'religious' engagement with the specific issue of welfare in recent years is Ashgate's two volume publication on *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe* edited by Grace Davie (among others).⁵³ These are primarily sociological in focus, however, with the theological reflection on the topic limited to Thomas Ekstrand's chapter in volume two.

More sustained in its theological attention, and very different from most of the other volumes mentioned above, is the already-cited collection *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy*, first published in 2007, and extended in 2014. Part one of this, looking at Economic Welfare and the Role of the State, contains chapters by Robert Sirico on 'Rethinking welfare, reviving charity: A Catholic alternative', and Philip Booth on 'Taxation and the size of the state', as well as others, such as chapter 14 on 'The social teaching of Benedict XVI' and chapter 15 on 'Subsidiarity and solidarity', all of which aligned to give a powerful, CST-grounded and economically-literate argument for a small state.⁵⁴

This brief review of ecclesiastical, institutional and theological engagement with the question of the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare should underline the fact that the topic has been one of real interest to British churches and theologians over recent years but that that attention has tended to be occasional, piecemeal, theologically-attenuated, or informed by sociological or economic ideas prior to theological ones. This thesis is an attempt to begin to rectify that; an attempt, in effect, to reflect theologically on the welfare state in a way that reverses the proportions of previous engagements and deals primarily with theological ideas, on which it then grounds a subsequent approach to welfare policy.

Having explained the justification of this approach, I will outline the methodology of theological anthropology I propose to use. However, before I do so it is important to achieve some terminological clarity, and explore what we mean by 'the welfare state'.

From the Welfare State to welfare states

As Chris Pierson and Matthieu Leimgruber have observed, the “late-breaking and multivalent” term ‘welfare state’ “occupies a crowded conceptual terrain”, debate over which “is further complicated by uncertainty over exactly what it is that the ‘welfare state’ (and its cognate terms) connotes.”⁵⁵

At a generic level, it is relatively straightforward and uncontroversial; the welfare state being understood as a system whereby the state “provides services, grants, allowances, pensions, etc., to protect the health and well-being of citizens, esp. those in need.”⁵⁶ Such a definition, however – and in particular terms like “provides”, “well-being” and “those in need” – invites further questions, pertaining to its scope, structure and objectives.

In the light of this, it is important to recognise at the outset that there is no single, clearly delineated or objective entity that is ‘The Welfare State’, however much an insular tradition might incline us to speak of one.⁵⁷ Not only do individual welfare states change significantly over time, but there are different *types* of welfare state in existence at any one time.

In 1990, the Danish sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen published an influential study entitled *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, which argued against the convention that “the level of social expenditure adequately reflects a state’s commitment to welfare”.⁵⁸ Esping-Andersen’s thesis was that the *kind* of welfare system counted for as much as its *size*. Other principles are involved – such as whether the system favours universal or targeted programs (and if targeted, on what criteria); whether it favours taxation or insurance as the preferred funding model (and if insurance, what combination of private, work and or state insurance); what range, duration and generosity of welfare entitlements it affords; and what mix of state, market, voluntary sector, and family it favours in provision – all of which shape the kind of welfare system, or “regime”, it is.

Esping-Andersen went on to propose and test the idea that welfare states cluster into groups or typologies.⁵⁹ He used two dimensions of analysis to determine these regimes, “decommodification” – the extent to which welfare is a matter of right which thereby enables recipients’ independence from the market – and “stratification” – the extent to which the welfare system cements social solidarities such as by “consolidating class divisions among wage-earners”.⁶⁰ On the basis of these dimensions, he identified three welfare regimes, which have since proved the basis of welfare state analysis.

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The first is the 'liberal' regime, also sometimes called the 'Social Assistance' or 'Anglo-Saxon' regime. This emerged from, and bears the hallmarks of, pre-existing traditions of poor relief. Within this system, social rights exist but are predicated on a demonstrable need. Benefits are limited to "a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state dependents".⁶¹ The system is parsimonious and favours means-testing: benefits are modest, entitlement rules are strict, and receipts of benefit often associated with stigma. The overall redistributive impact is negligible. It is individualistic in spirit and largely uncritical of the market.⁶²

The second is the 'conservative' or 'state-corporatist' regime. This emerges from state-directed programmes, and is often instituted by conservative parties, as a result of which it is commonly ordered towards fostering loyalty to the state, which itself enforces and organises a system of social insurance. Unlike the liberal regime, the 'conservative' one institutes social rights that are based on contribution: citizens receive benefits according to the extent to which they have earned them, rather than on the basis of need, and therefore there is a strong sense of entitlement, and a much weaker sense of stigma. This regime is also comparatively strong in its commitment to the traditional model of the family as a vehicle of welfare, the state discouraging the participation of married women in the workplace, and asserting its duty to intervene only when the family's capacity to do so is exhausted.

The third is the 'Social Democratic' regime. If the underlying principle of the liberal regime is need, and of the conservative regime is contribution, that of the social democratic regime is citizenship. The regime is predicated on the conviction that the state has a duty to provide basic equal benefit to all of its citizens, irrespective of their prior earnings, contributions, or particular needs. Welfare is universal but also often generous and free from stigma. The regime "constructs an essentially universal solidarity in favour of the welfare state. All benefit, all are dependent, and all will presumably feel obliged to pay."⁶³ In contrast to the conservative regime, this one is more willing to intervene in traditional family roles. The system is highly redistributive, and expensive, financed by means of universal and often high rate of central taxation.

By using these criteria to identify these classifications, Esping-Andersen was able to identify which countries 'fit' in which regimes. Neither his conclusions, nor the logic of his classifications have gone unchallenged. Nevertheless, his idea of different welfare regimes

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is now widely accepted, and for all the on-going debate about how many and on what criteria, there is broad consensus that welfare states differ in more ways than size, and cluster into regimes that reflect different conceptions of eligibility, citizenship, solidarity, equality, and need.

The emerging field of religion and welfare state studies has contributed to this shift by contending that Christian thought and practice has influenced the development of welfare regimes. Different theologically-informed attitudes to work, responsibility, poverty, family, and gender roles have, it is argued, shaped the evolution of different welfare regimes in historically Lutheran, Catholic, Calvinist, and denominationally-mixed cultures.⁶⁴ The precise extent to which this has been the case is still debated,⁶⁵ but the arguments deployed not only support Esping-Andersen's work but also underline the legitimacy and relevance of theological engagement with welfare states. In doing so, they help us to take the step from a sociologically and historically descriptive account of Christianity and welfare states to normative engagement based on theological anthropology. The following section outlines how this is to be achieved.

Justifying a normative approach to welfare states: Raymond Plant and Alan Deacon

Esping-Anderson complexified the standard conceptualisation of 'the welfare state' by introducing different 'dimensions' – of need, want, right, stigma, state loyalty, solidarity, etc. – to the fundamental understanding of welfare scale or generosity. Similarly, the manner in which Christian thought has informed the understanding of key concepts that shaped welfare provision in different Western societies implies a strong, if buried, normative element at work in that formation. Developing a welfare system that is marked by stigma, or strongly oriented to work, or encourages loyalty to the state, or is based primarily on contribution, or is predicated on traditional gender divides, carries with it certain conceptions of the personal and public good. In this regard, a way is made open for a normative approach to the proper function of the welfare state that is grounded on theologically-informed conceptions of anthropology.

Recognising this helps us to answer the common objection to a religious (or indeed any 'comprehensive moral') intervention in matters like welfare policy. If it could be established that the goods distributed by a welfare state are actually straightforwardly a matter of justice, and that justice is a matter of 'fairness' that can be resolved without

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recourse to conceptions of the good, it follows that any theological contribution to the debate is rendered unnecessary. This is the ‘common objection’, raised by liberal political theorists, part of a wide-ranging debate whose lines extend way beyond welfare provision. For reasons of space, I will rehearse briefly the main argument, and then articulate the ‘anthropological’ response, by drawing on the work of the political theorist Raymond Plant and welfare sociologist, Alan Deacon.

The argument that particular, contestable and comprehensive conceptions of the good should be immaterial to (social) policy is well known. John Rawls’ hypothetical contract made by rational individuals behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ was, in Plant’s words, an attempt “to neutralise particular interests, to neutralise attempts to make one conception of the good dominate over others.”⁶⁶ A demonstrable notion of *right* precedes (and precludes) any particular *good* in the determination of basic social principles, the result of which is that appealing to any conceptions of the good as a way of determining public debate about the distribution of goods inherent in social policy is unnecessary (and arguably harmful because divisive).⁶⁷

This argument has come in for sustained criticism since it was first developed, and has been subsequently refined. For our purposes, the most relevant and penetrating criticism came from the thinkers who were subsequently, and loosely, labelled ‘communitarian’,⁶⁸ who pointed out that the idea that “the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it”⁶⁹ which is central to Rawls’ theory of justice is not only contestable but a substantive anthropological position itself.

It is this point that lies at the foundation of the methodological approach within this thesis. There are many charges that one might level at the anthropological presuppositions that underlie this ‘fairness’ argument: it pays insufficient attention to constitutive attachments of the self; its asocial individualism is a poor reflection of any lived reality; it inadvertently undermines human dignity; it ignores “the extent to which people are constituted as the people that they are precisely by those conceptions [of the good] themselves”⁷⁰

These are all serious charges but in one sense extraneous to the basic fact that the argument presupposes a particular anthropology at all. The ‘person’ of Rawls’ justice-as-fairness argument is one in which “a human being’s capacity autonomously to choose its ends is not just one amongst many equally valuable capacities or features but rather forms

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the essence of her identity.”⁷¹ The vision of the human here is of the unencumbered choosing self.

Rawls reworked his theory in the light of these (and other) criticisms, and *Political Liberalism* presents a chastened theory of political justice that is presented “independently of any wider comprehensive religious or philosophical doctrine.”⁷² The extent to which this is possible is highly debateable,⁷³ and in any case even with such a reworking in place, the underlying criticism that Rawls’ concept of justice was still contingent on certain foundational anthropological assumptions is unaffected. The fact that social policy sits firmly within this narrower, political, field underlines the basic challenge: to think about the goods inherent in social policy demands the admission of certain conceptions of human good and human nature, and is therefore not necessarily closed to comprehensive moral doctrines such as that grounded in Christian theology.

What this might involve is illustrated by the work of political theorist, Raymond Plant, and in particular two publications, *Political philosophy and social welfare: Essays on the normative basis of welfare provision*⁷⁴ (co-authored with Peter Taylor-Gooby and Anthony Lesser) and *Politics, theology, and history*.⁷⁵ Writing the first in 1980, Plant observed that while political philosophy had long interrogated ideas like citizenship, rights, duties, etc. it had overlooked those concepts that were central to welfare.⁷⁶

At the time (before the work of Esping-Andersen), this could be assumed to mean predominantly ‘need’, but Plant extended the list to include “right, stigma, want and community”.⁷⁷ These, he argued, were “essentially contested concepts” not in the sense that they had no agreed meaning whatsoever but because, as he observes with regard to the concept of community, any “agreed descriptive meaning is so formal that it will be of no use in social and political analysis, and that once a move is made beyond this formal agreement then we are back with contestability and ideology once again.”⁷⁸

He made the same point in 2001 in *Politics, theology, and history*, dedicating part two of the book to showing that “there can be no authoritative rendering of crucial political and social concepts such as justice, freedom and community.”⁷⁹ Ideas like need, harm or community are necessarily “elaborated against the background of particular moral traditions, narratives and communities.”⁸⁰ “Social goods have social meanings”, and there is “no neutral account of human nature or the goods that human beings desire which could be used as a standard to determine which forms of human society meet human needs and

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desires most fully.”⁸¹ Ultimately, such concepts invariably draw on “a range of metaphysical or religious assumptions” the consequence of this “ineradicably normative and ideological” nature being deleterious on those social scientists who “wish to be allied with the natural sciences as the positivist programme would require them to be.”⁸²

Plant touches on what this means with regard to a number of concepts like “social justice”⁸³, merit,⁸⁴ wants,⁸⁵ liberty,⁸⁶ and harm.⁸⁷ However, he dwells at greatest length on how this contestability is made manifest in our understanding of “need” and “community” and it is the contestability of the first of these terms I will expound briefly here, as a way of illustrating how theological anthropology can engage with questions welfare policy.

As argued above, Plant reasoned in his earlier book that if “satisfaction of need is the only proper criterion for distribution of social service resources”⁸⁸ and if need can be “fixed in some straightforward, neutral objective way...bypassing contestable appeals to social and political values”, the contribution of ethical or religious ideas is surplus to requirement.⁸⁹ Drawing on the work of G.E.M. Anscombe,⁹⁰ he argues that “A claim by B that X is needed is fully intelligible only when the purpose for which it is needed is exhibited.”⁹¹ ‘Need’, in effect, is shorthand for ‘need in order to’. It is only when such ends or purposes “are both articulated and found to be justified” that the appeal to need attains any moral force.⁹² Talk of needs is ineradicably teleological, the classification of needs “depend[ant] crucially upon ends, goals and purposes.” Need may indeed be “rooted in human nature”, as Plant’s co-author Harry Lesser observes, but “the precise form it takes will always be determined in part by social conditions.”⁹³ And, we might add, not just social conditions for if, as Plant argues, “needs are means to ends: a subject always needs something for some purpose”⁹⁴ to define what a need is necessarily involves integrating ideas of its subject and the “purposes” it wishes to pursue. In other words, to say X is needed by Y for purposes of Z, is to assume something about the nature and telos of Y.

It is important to underline here, by way of parenthesis, a point raised earlier, namely that recognising the essential contestability of a term like ‘need’ is not to resign all attempts at establishing an agreed meaning or to abandon everything to a relativistic discourse in which different, subjectively-defined conceptions of ‘need’ talk past one another. Plant and his co-authors proceed to outline a concept of need that they judge to be as widely acceptable and non-controversial as possible.⁹⁵ The point is not that there can’t be

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widespread agreement on such essentially contestable terms, but that any agreement has to be open and honest about the grounds of those terms.

It is also worth noting in passing, that this theoretical issue has been repeatedly born out in the history of social policy itself. Thus, for example, when Seebohm Rowntree conducted his first study into poverty in York at end of the nineteenth century, he found it necessary to distinguish between “primary” poverty and “secondary” poverty.⁹⁶ In a similar vein, William Beveridge defined “want” in his war-time report as “benefit adequate to all normal needs, in duration and amount” but straightaway acknowledged that “determination of what is required for reasonable human existence is to some extent a matter of judgement.”⁹⁷ As Chris Renwick observed, at every stage on the road towards the welfare state, “far-reaching ideas about concepts such as human nature were embedded into both political discourse and the seemingly unremarkable administrative structures encountered in everyday life.”⁹⁸

The example of need illustrates not simply the essential contestability of a term that is central to welfare debate but also indicates how such a term grounds its moral content ultimately in anthropological presuppositions. Plant himself, towards the conclusion of *Politics, History and Theology* uses his argument to direct theological engagement in social policy. Fundamental concepts, like justice, freedom, rights and community, he argues, have “a normative basis” and it is precisely to these “complex moral issues to which these religious beliefs might direct their attention.”⁹⁹

Plant’s exploration of the essential contestability of foundational concepts of social welfare, and the need and potential to draw on anthropological and theological commitments to give them coherence and content, offers a robust theoretical foundation of this thesis. The following chapters will outline the theological anthropology of four major twentieth theologians, focusing on the implications for their theology of the welfare state. In doing so, it will not only explore how these thinkers have drawn on their foundational theological beliefs “about the basis of human nature” to delineate the “kind of institutional structures” inherent in the welfare state (to use Plant’s terms) but it will also generate the raw material for a fresh approach to contemporary welfare in the final chapter.

Something of how this *has* happened – of how such (theologically-informed) anthropological assumptions have in practice informed thinking and policy proposals about the welfare state – can be seen through the work of Alan Deacon, Emeritus Professor

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of Social Policy at the University of Leeds, supplemented by that of Andrew Connell, a research associate at Cardiff University.

In a number of papers and publications, most notably his 2002 work *Perspectives on Welfare*, Deacon explores how “arguments about welfare are rooted in more fundamental disagreements about the nature of human beings and the meaning of a good society.”¹⁰⁰ He outlines a number of categories in the course of his analysis and shows how each is rooted in a particular conception of human nature. I will mention three here (Titmuss, Field, Etzioni/Sacks), and add a fourth (Thatcher), drawing out the theological associations in the process.

First, there is the idea that state welfare has its basis in fundamentally altruistic human nature, an approach Deacon associates with Richard Titmuss and the “quasi-Titmuss” school. Titmuss, although no Christian himself, was influenced by Richard Tawney, and in particular Tawney’s conviction that everyone was entitled to equality of respect by virtue of their common relationship to their Creator, from which, according to Deacon, followed the belief that all were entitled to resources and opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.¹⁰¹ On this basis, Titmuss favoured welfare that was, in effect, close to Esping-Andersen’s social democratic regime, universal, non-judgemental and oriented to reducing inequality with an end to improving fellowship between citizens. New structures of welfare would release long pent-up human capacities and desires to serve a good wider than that of the self, allowing *natural* sentiments of altruism, reciprocity and social duty to flourish.¹⁰²

If this loose school of welfare thought was predicated ultimately on an altruistic understanding of humans, a second somewhat different view is exemplified for Deacon in the work of Labour MP, Frank Field. Field’s long involvement in welfare politics has at times been explicitly theological, and he has described his welfare reform proposals of the mid-1990s as “about placing a Christian understanding of mankind centre stage.”¹⁰³ His anthropology reacted against Titmuss’s “sanitised, post-Christian view of human character” which writes the “fallen side of mankind” out of the script.¹⁰⁴ Field’s issue wasn’t that humans couldn’t or didn’t behave altruistically.¹⁰⁵ Rather, it was that to assume this was the natural or inevitable form of human motivation was to court disaster. Policy had to recognise the reality of sin and policy-makers to “wrestle with the angel and the serpent in each of us”.¹⁰⁶

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According to Andrew Connell, who studied Frank Field as part of his analysis of New Labour's early welfare policy, Field's anthropology was informed by a doctrine of free will and the goal of freedom.¹⁰⁷ As Field wrote in 1975, "for me, the main goals of public policy are the extension of human freedom while at the same time creating a more equal society."¹⁰⁸ However, he also placed a singular emphasis on what he saw at the core of human nature, self-interest. Welfare structures, Field argued, needed to recognise and work with *that* grain of human nature, rather than pretending that humans were better than they really were. "No welfare system can function effectively if it is not based on a realistic view of human nature... Mankind was (and is) capable of acts of extraordinary altruism, but altruism is generally secondary to self-interest."¹⁰⁹

Field emphasised the need to combat poverty and to ensure greater material equality but this was not for its own sake but "because, and really only because, it led to a more equal distribution of freedom."¹¹⁰ Field, unlike the quasi-Titmuss school, took agency seriously. That recognised, it is worth emphasising that Field also had an acute sense of how circumstance affected moral agency, argued that policy makers should foster the right conditions for the development of that agency, strongly protested against the level (if not the fact) of human material inequality, and had only limited faith in the market to deliver human goods.

Field's theologically-informed anthropology does not map neatly onto any of Esping-Andersen's regimes. This not only reminds us of the limits of Esping-Andersen's regime categories but also points to the way that a (theological) anthropological approach to welfare can problematize some of the foundational categories of welfare state policy, an observation to which we will return in the conclusion.

There is no such problem of categorisation with the third example, which stands further along the spectrum from Titmuss through Field. Margaret Thatcher was one of the few British politicians of the time who could rival Field's explicitly theo-political reasoning,¹¹¹ setting out her Christian anthropology in a number of high profile speeches before and during her premiership.

In one of the earlier of these, to an audience at St Lawrence Jewry in 1978, she explained that "there are two very general and seemingly conflicting ideas about society which come down to us from the New Testament". One was "that great Christian doctrine that we are all members one of another expressed in the concept of the Church on earth as the Body of

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Christ, [from which] we learn our interdependence.” The other was that “we are all responsible moral beings with a choice between good and evil, beings who are infinitely precious in the eyes of their Creator.” It was from this delicate theological balance that her Christian politics was formed. A decade later she began her so-called ‘Sermon on the Mound’ to the Church Assembly at Scotland by outlining three “distinctive marks” of Christianity, namely that

“first...from the beginning man has been endowed by God with the fundamental right to choose between good and evil...second, that we were made in God’s own image and, therefore, we are expected to use all our own power of thought and judgement in exercising that choice...and third, that Our Lord Jesus Christ...when faced with His terrible choice and lonely vigil chose to lay down His life that our sins may be forgiven.”

One could be excused for thinking these three principles were, in fact, one, and that Thatcher’s latter (and, as it happened, last) great theological excursion revealed how her anthropology had shifted from a decade earlier losing balance in favour of a more uncomplicatedly individualist, choice-based vision. In reality, and in spite of what she said at St Lawrence Jewry, Thatcher firmly believed there was no tension between the two principles, claiming in her Iain Macleod Memorial Lecture in 1977 that “there is not and cannot possibly be any hard and fast antithesis between self-interest and care for others”.¹¹²

Thatcher’s (theological) anthropology had much that is recognisable in Field’s, with its emphasis on fundamental human equality, agency and self-interest, alongside its rejection of Titmuss’s altruism and the idea that material equality was an end in itself. It differed, however, in as far as she saw individualised self-interest as a sufficient foundation for the wider public good, with a consequent singular emphasis of freedom of choice, and a broad indifference to how circumstance limited agency. The impact of this on Thatcher’s attitude to the market and the state is well known, and although the impact on welfare policy is open to different interpretations,¹¹³ it is fair to say that in Thatcher’s explicitly theologically-grounded conception of human agency, autonomy and sufficient self-interest we see how a clear link with Esping-Andersen’s ‘liberal’ welfare regime.

Fourthly and lastly, Deacon identifies a conception of human nature that is motivated not by altruism, situated self-interest, or unencumbered individualism but primarily by

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commitment and relational duty. This category he labels, loosely, as communitarian, drawing on Amitai Etzioni and Jonathan Sacks, among others, for its details. Its understanding of human nature rejects the idea of individuals as autonomous selves, whether motivated by self-interest or altruism, but rather sees them embedded in community, their characters, practices and beliefs formed by the experience and expectations of family, friends, and other immediate networks and groups. Such relationships are not short-termist, self-interested or contractual but rather, drawing on Sacks' *The Politics of Hope*, 'covenantal', relationships predicated "on loyalty, fidelity, holding together even when things seem to be driving you apart".¹¹⁴

This 'communitarian' category of human nature is alert to the significance of human agency and responsibility, and willing to talk about right and wrong. It insists that social policy recognises and respects these communal and quasi-covenantal bodies, especially the family. It also recognises the need to build popular support for welfare, eschewing 'heroic agendas' based on human altruism. All this steers it clear from the Titmuss school, not least in its willingness to countenance conditionality on the grounds of the importance of reciprocity. However, it also recognises the importance of context on the exercise of moral agency, and instinctively looks to persuasion rather than compulsion, as a means of shaping personal behaviour. Like Field's vision, this category is harder to place within Esping-Andersen's regimes, not least because it is the least clear and worked through of those Deacon highlights, but it is nonetheless closer to his 'conservative' or 'state-corporatist' category than to either the liberal or social democratic ones.

In summary: just as Esping-Andersen's work opens up the possibility and need to talk about types of welfare state, rather than simply spending levels; and the work of those in the emerging field of religion and welfare studies shows how Christian theological ideas of work, responsibility, poverty, family, etc. have influenced the formation of these regimes in the past; so the work of Raymond Plant, at a political theoretical level, and Alan Deacon, at a social science one, point out how Christian theological anthropology can inform contemporary discussions of the proper function of the welfare state. The way in which we conceive of the human and the human good has, can and should shape the objectives, structures and policies of welfare states. The final section of this introductory chapter will look at those few instances in contemporary Christian thought in which this has actually happened before introducing the four major twentieth century theologians within whose work this link will be traced in detail, and from whom the ideas and materials for a

contemporary Christian theological approach to the welfare state in the final chapter will be drawn.

Theological anthropology and political theology in William Temple, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II and Rowan Williams

As we have noted, the potential for critical and fruitful theological engagement with the question of the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare reflects the fact that this question invariably draws on normative concepts of, for example, need/ want, community, family, and so forth, and that these concepts are themselves rooted in underlying conceptions of the human. Political theory rests in some measure on philosophical anthropology, and political theology on theological anthropology.

Just as it is important to be clear about the meaning of the phrase ‘welfare state’, it is worth getting a little conceptual clarity around the phrase “theological anthropology”. There are many directions in which this term might send us, not least towards major questions about the fundamental ‘constitution’ of the human. John W. Cooper in his essay on ‘Scripture and Philosophy on the Unity of Body and Soul: An Integrative Method for Theological Anthropology’¹¹⁵ outlines some of the responses to this issue, teasing apart the essential difference between what he calls historic Christian dualism, various kinds of theistic naturalism and dual-aspect monism, and straightforward biblical monism. For all the difference there is between these positions, however, he argues that whichever of the options one favours it doesn’t alter the basic fact of body-soul holism – different from monism – the idea that “there is a virtual consensus among biblical scholars, theologians, and philosophers that scripture affirms the unity and integration of human life.”¹¹⁶

“Monists and dualists agree that body, soul, spirit, heart, mind and will – whatever their metaphysical nature and relation – are diverse but interdependent, interactive, and integrated aspects or parts of living, active humans”.¹¹⁷ Although this does not mean that metaphysical questions pertaining to human constitution are entirely irrelevant for our purposes, it does allow us to move the focus away from them and, assuming the basic commitment to body-soul holism, explore the wider questions of what Christian scripture and theological reflection have to say about human nature, its goods, including its social goods, its fallibilities, and its ends. Thus Christian/ theological anthropology (and sometimes just ‘anthropology’ for short) is used throughout this thesis to denote the ideas pertaining to human nature and its goods that are drawn from reasoning about Christian

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scripture and tradition, in such a way as to distinguish it, for example, from the kind of social anthropology such as deployed by Michael Banner, for theological purposes, in *The Ethics of Everyday Life*.¹¹⁸

The dependence of political theology on theological anthropology is a wholly unexceptional statement when it comes to areas like economic or environmental policy.¹¹⁹ Thus, for example, several of contributions to the 2016 collection *Theology and Economics* pick up this theme, most substantially Donald Hay and Gordon Menzies' essay, which seeks a better, and theologically-grounded model for economic behaviour than that offered by 'Rational Economic Man' and 'Rational Choice Theory'.¹²⁰

However, this is still comparatively uncharted territory when it comes to thinking about the proper function of the welfare state. There are a few minor exceptions which are important to note. The von Hügel report *Moral, but No Compass* gestured briefly in this direction, remarking that "a closer inspection of the ethics, values and principles informing many policy choices and positions suggests that they are...rooted in a profound understanding of what constitutes human flourishing", but did not pursue this observation.¹²¹ Its later report, *The UK Government's 'Big Society' Programme and Catholic Social Teaching*, mentioned "the clash between two different anthropological understandings of what constitutes human flourishing". This was the clash between personalism which "defined the human person in an organic way as someone rooted in a particular community but opening out on others in dialogue and love" and which characterised Catholic Social Thought, and the concept of the human that was "based on exaggerated notions of individual autonomy...often exercised without regard for the social consequences of individual decisions" and which characterised secular humanism.¹²² This difference in anthropological conceptions did cash out in political terms, the former "accepting the totality of a human being, including his natural physiological and gender characteristics", the latter "us[ing] human rights and equality legislation to promote the notion of the human being as the practitioner of an almost absolute freedom of choice". However, these examples, coupled with the less than complete conceptual coherence surrounding the Big Society idea that the report identified, intimated that the link between anthropological conceptions and welfare policy remained an obscure one.

Maurice Glasman's chapter on 'Welfare and the Common Good' in *The Challenge of Social Welfare* mentioned, in its discussion on 'relational welfare', how "human beings should be

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understood not as either selfish or altruistic but in terms of “self-interest broadly conceived”, a position based “on a broadly Aristotelian reading of persons in which human flourishing is understood as bound up with the well-being of family, friends and colleagues”.¹²³ John Atherton, Christopher Baker and John Reader drew on the question of theological anthropology, and in particular William Temple’s theological anthropology, in their short discussion of welfare in *Christianity and the New Social Order*.¹²⁴ Indeed, this brief treatment is one of the very few Christian engagements in this area to register an awareness of Esping-Andersen’s three regimes of welfare capitalism.¹²⁵

In a 2016 paper for the House of Bishops on ‘The Enemy Isolation’, Malcolm Brown drew clear connections between the “ineluctably relational” Christian understanding of God as Trinity, the development of personhood through “interdependence” and “the practices and habits of neighbourliness”, and the need for “a good welfare structure to sustain [such] communities”.¹²⁶ In the process Brown touched on a number of the key issues – work, family, place, responsibility; on several key practical considerations – sanctions, bureaucracy, contributory schemes; and on a number of often neuralgic details.

One of the most theologically developed engagements in this topic was in a seminar held at Archbishops’ House, Westminster in 2011, on ‘Catholic Social Teaching and the philosophy behind the “Big Society”’, a discussion paper from which was subsequently published. This made a number of pointed references to the Welfare State but did not focus exclusively on this so much as the ideas that do (or should) inform it and its context. Thus, it highlighted an understanding of personhood that was “optimistic, social and oriented to human potential” (para. 26), self-transcending and developmental (para. 28), “always oriented towards others” (para. 32), and yet marked by “frailty... and the capacity of individuals and societies for alienation and radical evil” (para. 29). It placed this anthropology within a further context of the common good, solidarity, true compassion, “the relational understanding of the Trinity” (para. 36), “structures of sin” (para. 41), the role of the Church and the principle of subsidiarity, and explored how that was to be “translated into practical politics” (para 39). This made for a substantial agenda for just 10,000 words, in the process offering one of the deeper and more rounded understandings of how a theologically-informed conception of human nature, in its wider sense, informed thinking relating to the welfare state.

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These six examples – *Moral, But No Compass*, *The UK Government's 'Big Society' Programme*, Maurice Glasman's chapter on 'Welfare and the Common Good', *Christianity and the New Social Order*, Malcolm Brown's 'The Enemy Isolation', and 'Catholic Social Teaching and the philosophy behind the "Big Society"' – show how the bridge between theological anthropology and the welfare state has sometimes been noticed and ventured across if only rarely, hurriedly and tentatively. This thesis intends to strengthen and secure that bridge (to push the metaphor a little further than is warranted) by examining how four twentieth century theologians have themselves crossed it, and how has the theological anthropology of each informed their political theology, with specific reference to the welfare state.

The number of potential relevant theologians who have written on theological anthropology and political theology, and have linked the two with reference to the role of the state in providing welfare, is not great. The four thinkers I elected to study encompass temporal, theological and geographical spectra. Two are taken from the formative and optimistic years of the welfare state and two from later, more downbeat years of welfare retrenchment; two come from the Roman Catholic tradition, two from the Anglican; and two from an insular English (or English and Welsh) context, one from a Franco-American context, and one from a Polish-global one. Importantly, all four thinkers wrote at length on both issues of theological anthropology and political theology and, crucially for my purpose, all four recognised the cardinal link between the two. Others might conceivably have been chosen, such as John Courtney Murray, Pope Benedict XVI, John Milbank, or Luke Bretherton. However, given (a) the widely-recognised theological depth and influence of my four figures, (b) the range of spectra that they cover, and (c) the fact that they themselves reference or draw on other figures (including three of those named above), I felt that William Temple, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Rowan Williams were the best possible sources to achieve my goal given the inevitable limitations of space.

William Temple was successively Bishop of Manchester, Archbishop of York, and Archbishop of Canterbury before his premature death in 1944. In a number of short publications, many originating in lecture series, he articulated an understanding of the state that adds nuance and depth to his best known wartime publication. This re-reading of Temple, finding in his work a conceptualisation of the state that is more pluralist and more reserved than either his best known publication or the tradition that took his name after the war, has been underway for some time.¹²⁷ Building on that tradition, I emphasise the extent to which Temple believed, throughout a career in which his view of the state

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changed with circumstance, that any legitimate conception of the state must ultimately rest on a proper conception of the human person.

Building on this retrieval of the centrality of ‘personalism’ – allowing for the slight anachronism of that term – within Temple’s political theology, and highlighting the contact points between his and Jacques Maritain’s work, the chapter adopts and develops his own schema for describing human personality, as laid out in *The Nature of Personality* and in his *Pilgrim* editorials, modifying it with Temple’s own understanding of human sinfulness, which emerged more sharply in mid-career, and also his understanding of the idea of gift within human anthropology, which found particular emphasis in the detailed study on *Men Without Work*, which Temple commissioned, for which he wrote the Introduction, and by which he was profoundly influenced in the 1930s.

With this multi-dimensional theological anthropology in place, both true to Temple’s own formulation and to a fresh reading of his emerging ideas, the chapter then teases apart two linked but distinct approaches within his political theology, that of the state as provider and the state as broker of welfare. Focusing primarily on the latter, highlighting the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, R.M. MacIver and John Neville Figgis, and drawing out the parallels with Jacques Maritain, the chapter particularly examines Temple’s conceptualisation of the state as *broker and protector* of the associational activity by means of which human personality and freedom are developed through fellowship, service and gift. Recognising that Temple’s political theology oscillated between this vision, and that of the state as *provider* welfare, a vision for which he is better known on account of his war-time writings, the chapter nonetheless argues that this slightly occluded aspect of Temple’s thought, and its roots in his theological anthropology, are valuable for any contemporary theological reassessment of the welfare state.

The second figure, Jacques Maritain, a Catholic convert and Thomistic philosopher, lacks Temple’s occasional moments of political specificity. However, the idea of the person was central to his political and social thought and his writings exhibit a sustained engagement with the idea of personhood, in particular the goods of communication and gift, while also offering a careful demarcation of state, society and body politic in the responsibility of creating the conditions for the development of that personhood.

I analyse how Maritain’s (sometimes slightly obscure) reading of human materiality and his understanding of freedom of autonomy are ordered to the goods of communication and gift

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in which humans satisfy their “inner urge to communications of knowledge and love.”¹²⁸ Freedom, communication and gift are all affected by human sinfulness, and although I discern a certain ambivalence in Maritain’s writings concerning the severity of the wound of sin within human nature, Maritain is nonetheless clear that, while it is “absurd” to expect the body politic to assume, still less make, “all men...good and fraternal to one another”, it is proper for it to seek “social structures, institutions, and laws” that “orient the energies of social life toward such a friendship.”¹²⁹

Although he only talks about state ‘welfare’ occasionally, I show how Maritain’s vision of the state’s function in this regard has clear parallels with Temple’s mid-career writings, seeing the state’s responsibility as that of securing the material and the associational infrastructure to enable the development of human personality. More precisely, I show how his understanding of the (welfare) state is predicated on its responsibility for the “temporal common good”, made real through a socialised economy and rich ecology of associational activity, underpinned by a legal infrastructure, framed largely in terms of rights, the state’s role in which being one primarily of “arbitrage”¹³⁰ or “regulation”.¹³¹ It is this vision, I argue, that Maritain sees as properly honouring the theocentric personalistic humanism that lies at the heart of his politics.

The third figure, John Paul II, was pope from 1978 to 2005, having spent his intellectually, theologically and ecclesiastically formative years under Soviet influence in Poland. His entire theological enterprise, first Thomistic but latterly more explicitly Christological, was focused on the nature of the human person, and he saw the “correct view of the human person and of his unique value” as the guiding principles of “of all of the Church’s social doctrine.”¹³²

Primarily through his three social encyclicals, *Laborem exercens*, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, *Centesimus annus*, but obliquely through much else of his papal writing and speeches, I examine how his understanding of the human person was the foundation of the state and the wider social good. John Paul’s more scripturally-grounded conceptualisation of the person distinguishes him from Temple and Maritain and thus adds a new and important dimension to the anthropological analyses of this thesis. Similarly, his understanding of and emphasis on the capacity and responsibility of human rationality distinguishes his anthropology from that of the other subjects, placing emphasis on the idea that to be human is to pursue truth through reason. That noted, John Paul’s anthropology extends

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and deepens, rather than contradicts, that of other figures in this thesis, such as in his clear focus on the communication and gift that is central to personhood.

John Paul II is the most critical of our four figures about welfare state (or the ‘Social Assistance State’ as it was called in *Centesimus annus*) and although he is not categorical in his hostility, his conception of the human orients him to an understanding of the welfare state that is subtly different in emphasis if not in content. According to his thought, the state’s primary role in securing welfare is firstly through the supervision and regulation of the market economy to minimise unemployment and ensure maximal participation in the economy through meaningful work that respects the dignity of the worker and ensures appropriate remuneration; secondly, through protecting and helping the family, both directly and indirectly; and thirdly, facilitating the ‘associational solidarity’ by means of which needs are met and personhood is nurtured. Beyond this, there is certainly the potential for more substantial and direct state provision of welfare, but only in unusual, extreme and temporary circumstances, and it is rare for John Paul to envisage a state welfare provision that circumvents the “effective instruments of solidarity”.

Rowan Williams was Archbishop of Canterbury from 2002 to 2012, having been a leading academic at both Oxford and Cambridge, Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop of Wales. Prolific, difficult, and with a wide range of theological and intellectual influences, Williams is as clear as the three other subjects in this thesis that “it’s impossible to have anything resembling an intelligent discussion in the political and social realm without struggling to clarify what we actually believe about human beings.” In a range of lectures delivered as Archbishop, he repeatedly made this link, with regard to economic policy,¹³³ the law,¹³⁴ the environment,¹³⁵ human rights,¹³⁶ and the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare.

Williams brings an important and explicit ‘multi-dimensionality’ to our picture of theological anthropology. Although aspects of this ‘multi-dimensionality’ correspond with those of Temple, Maritain and John Paul II – human materiality, createdness, dependency, communicativeness, relationality, and self-gift – Williams brings important new elements to the picture. His concept of personhood is most explicitly rooted in a theology of creation, specifically creation as itself necessarily communicative. He emphasises the temporal and developmental nature of human personhood, the imaginative core to personal growth, and the fundamental mystery and unknowability of the human person.

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To be human, for Williams more than the other figures here studied, is, finally, to be unknowable, unfinished, and endlessly generative. Human personhood is continually being modified in communication with the other, in the exercise of the imagination and in self-giving.

This helps generate a theology of the welfare state that sees the state's role as creating the right "climate" (a frequently used metaphor) for the first-level communities in which welfare is secured and personhood developed. Importantly, however, this involves far more than the minimal or even "referee" state it might be taken to imply, and Williams is less reserved about the state's direct responsibility in securing welfare than is John Paul II. His welfare state is not a disinterested arbitrator between the communities that are the primary locus for welfare but an institution that needs to reflect and draw on those communities within which it operates. Williams' welfare state simultaneously has the responsibility of facilitating connections, clearing civic space, building capacity, and promoting and resourcing collaboration between different welfare-orientated communities, *and* guaranteeing "a safety net of public welfare provision" and protection from acts that outrage human dignity, directly if necessarily. In this way, it is, as I term it in the chapter, a 'thick brokerage' welfare state.

The pattern in which I treat these four thinkers adopts that of the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the [Catholic] Church* (which itself was a valuable background source for the thesis). This grounds the Church's teaching on social doctrine, including on welfare and, briefly (and somewhat negatively) in paragraph 351, on the "Welfare State", on its conception of the human person, particularly visibly so in Part 1 Chapter 1.3 ('The human person in the plan of God's love') and Part 1 Chapter 3 ('Social doctrine and the personalist principle'). Indeed, the connection between the format of the *Compendium* and this thesis goes beyond the explicit structural link between theological anthropology and political theology and incorporated what relevant chapter (describing the human person and human rights) in the *Compendium* calls the "the many aspects of the human person" (Chapter 3.3). The *Compendium* dwells on "*all on the principal and indispensable dimensions of the human person*" (para 124; *emphases original*), including the inner (40), relational and social (110), bodily (128), cognitive (130), affective and sexual (148), and transcendent and historical (170). In this way, the *Compendium's* model offers a coherent, well-worked-through and pertinent foundation for the approach I have adopted in this thesis, one that works as well for its non-Catholic subjects as it does for Jacques Maritain and John Paul II.

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Having explored the theological anthropology of each of the four figures and analysed the ways in which this informs and shapes their conceptualisation of the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare, I draw on these findings in the final concluding chapter.

This begins by returning to the intellectual foundations of the thesis in reverse order – Deacon, Plant and Esping-Anderson – and showing how the theological-political anthropology drawn from Temple *et al* critically engages with the discussions they opened up. Thus, the analysis of Temple *et al* accepts but simultaneously complexifies and expands Deacon's connection of anthropology with the welfare state by introducing a multi-dimensional and developmental understanding of human personhood into the mix, in place of his uni-dimensional conception based on altruism and selfishness.

This multi-dimensional understanding of persons – as created and material, agential, sinful, relational and communicative, transcendent, creative, and oriented to, and fulfilled by gift – can then be brought to bear on Plant's discussion of contestable social concepts. Such a rich, multi-dimensional conception of the human person will naturally inform how one understands ideas of need, right or harm that underpin the objectives of a welfare state. However, importantly, it also problematizes any idea that there can be a single, dominant social concept informing the purpose of the welfare state, whether that is need, merit, or citizenship, as per Esping-Anderson three welfare regimes. Rather, as I argue in this section in the final chapter, this multi-dimensional conception of the human person orients us in various ways, towards a welfare state that, for example, concerns itself with material dignity, respect for agency, the relationality of civil society, appropriate monitoring and evaluation of welfare services, and a willingness to foster creative experiment among groups and organisations in the provision of welfare. In short, a multi-dimensional anthropology can help pin down Plant's contestable social concepts, but can also help decide which contestable social concepts are relevant to the shaping of a welfare state in the first place.

This critical engagement with Plant's contestable social concepts naturally has implications for our engagement with the third of this thesis' foundations, Esping-Anderson (as intimated in the previous paragraph). Here in the final chapter, we once again engage critically, acknowledging Esping-Anderson's expansion of the conceptualisation of welfare state beyond mere size but simultaneously complexifying his potential contribution to the

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discussion. This section of the concluding chapter argues that although aspects of Esping-Andersen's welfare regimes do resonate with the thinking of Temple *et al*, none satisfactorily captures the fullness of multi-dimensional personhood. Temple *et al* do not, in principle, support or reject any particular welfare regime, still less a straightforwardly larger or smaller welfare state, but ask how it serves the development of the person, or fails to. The consequence, then is to foreclose of any attempt to shortcut the hard work of constructing an approach to welfare that honours the theological anthropology of Temple *et al* by simply reaching for an established welfare regime from the shelf.

The second and final part of the concluding chapter then responds to this challenge, by putting forward a more concrete set of suggestions for the development of a 'Christian welfare state' – or, less hubristically, a vision of the welfare state that is consonant with the understanding of the person and her good as understood by Christian theology. The final section, drawing on all that has preceded it, and in occasional dialogue with recent (theological and secular) British interventions on this question, outlines a vision of the foundation, funding, structure, and ethos of a welfare state that recognises and honours the multi-dimensional theological anthropology gleaned in the preceding chapters.

In summary, this thesis offers five new and distinctive lines of thought. First, it brings theological anthropology into the field of welfare state studies where it has heretofore been present only in the shadows. Second, it brings discussion of the proper function of the *welfare* state into theological discourse, where it has heretofore be present only partially. Third, it draw outs and offers fresh readings of the connection between theological anthropology and political theology in William Temple, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Rowan Williams, subjects that have to date been incompletely attended to, if at all. Fourthly, it outlines a nuanced and multi-dimensional concept of the person that resists the tendencies towards uni-dimensionality seen much welfare thought. And finally, by drawing on, critiquing and developing an original synthesis of these four thinkers, it offers a concrete, theological-grounded vision for the future of welfare state in contemporary Britain.

¹ Taylor (2007), p.737.

² Sentamu (2015), p.xiv.

³ Barnett (1986), p.15.

⁴ Renwick (2017), Cooper (2017), Timmins (1995).

⁵ Husselbee and Ballard (2010)

⁶ Blackley (1878)

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- ⁷ Chadwick (1966-1970), Vol. II, p. 285.
- ⁸ Spencer (2011), Catterall (2016)
- ⁹ Bebbington (1982)
- ¹⁰ Norman (1976), p. 220.
- ¹¹ Garbett (1950), p. 306; Chandler and Hein (2016), pp. 183-86.
- ¹² *Faith in the city* (1985), 3.16; See Carter (1986), Smith (1990), Partington (2006)
- ¹³ Beattie (2014)
- ¹⁴ Chandler and Hein (2016), p. 201
- ¹⁵ Spencer (2017), esp. pp. 54-63
- ¹⁶ Booth (2007; rev. 2014)
- ¹⁷ Prochaska (2006)
- ¹⁸ Spencer (2016)
- ¹⁹ Micklethwait and Wooldridge (2014) p.5; Bourne (2015), Piketty (2014), p. 483.
- ²⁰ Spencer (2011)
- ²¹ Gill and Lundsgaarde, (2004), p. 399.
- ²² *Faith in the city* (1985)
- ²³ *Not Just for the Poor* (1986)
- ²⁴ Fletcher (2013); Brown (2016); *Who is my neighbour?* (2015)
- ²⁵ CBCEW (1996)
- ²⁶ Brown (2010)
- ²⁷ CBCEW (2011b)
- ²⁸ JPIT (2013)
- ²⁹ Eckley and Sefton (2013a); Eckley and Sefton (2013b)
- ³⁰ St Paul's Institute (2012)
- ³¹ Calhoun (2016)
- ³² Davis et al (2008); Loughlin et al (2003)
- ³³ Turnbull (2016)
- ³⁴ Spencer (2013)
- ³⁵ Beattie (2014)
- ³⁶ Bingham (2014)
- ³⁷ Carter (1986), pp. 18-23; Harvey (1989); Smith (1990), pp. 18-23; Clark (1993); Filby (2015).
- ³⁸ These were “creation”, “human interdependence”, “the biblical concern for justice and for the poor”, “human sin and social disintegration” and “the kingdom of God and Hope”.
- ³⁹ Anna Rowlands', John Milbank and Adrian Pabst's, Ed Cox's and Nick Spencer's to be precise.
- ⁴⁰ Davis et al (2008), p. 13.
- ⁴¹ Davis et al (2008), p. 15.
- ⁴² Forrester (1985)
- ⁴³ Forrester (1997)
- ⁴⁴ Chapman (2005) and Chapman (2008)
- ⁴⁵ Sentamu (2015)
- ⁴⁶ Brown (2014)
- ⁴⁷ O'Donovan (2005), p. 5
- ⁴⁸ O'Donovan (2005), p. 7, 57
- ⁴⁹ Sagovsky and McGrail (2015)
- ⁵⁰ Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011)
- ⁵¹ Wells (2015)
- ⁵² Bretherton (2019), Bretherton (2015), Milbank and Pabst(2016)
- ⁵³ Bäckström and Davie (2010); Bäckström et al (2011)
- ⁵⁴ Booth (2007; rev. 2014)
- ⁵⁵ Pierson and Leimgruber in Castles et al (2012) pp. 32-33
- ⁵⁶ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (2007), p. 3,653.
- ⁵⁷ See Deacon (2002), p. 4.
- ⁵⁸ Esping-Andersen (1990), p. 19.
- ⁵⁹ See Marshall (1950) and Titmuss (1958)
- ⁶⁰ Esping-Andersen (1990), p. 23
- ⁶¹ Esping-Andersen, 1990: 26
- ⁶² Arts and Gelissen (2002)
- ⁶³ Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28

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- ⁶⁴ Wilensky in Flora and Heidenheimer (1981); Castles(1994); Heidenheimer (1983); Manow (2004); Kahl in van Kersbergen and Manow (2009), pp. 267-296; Morgan in van Kersbergen and Manow (2009), pp. 56-90.
- ⁶⁵ van Kersbergen and Manow in Castles *et al* (2012), p. 266
- ⁶⁶ Plant (2001), p. 321.
- ⁶⁷ Rawls (1971; rev. 2005), p. 514
- ⁶⁸ Sandel (1982); Taylor (1989); MacIntyre (1981); Walzer (1983); Mulhall and Swift (1992)
- ⁶⁹ Rawls (1971; rev. 2005), p. 560.
- ⁷⁰ Mulhall and Swift (1992), p. 10.
- ⁷¹ Mulhall and Swift (1992), p. 46-47.
- ⁷² Rawls (1993), p. 223.
- ⁷³ Rawls (1993), pp. 299-300; Mulhall and Swift (1992), pp. 192-198.
- ⁷⁴ Plant (1980). This was, in fact a collection of essays written in collaboration with Harry Lesser and Peter Taylor-Gooby. Plant was responsible for chapters 2, 4, 5, 9 and 10.
- ⁷⁵ Plant (2001)
- ⁷⁶ Plant (1980), p. 1.
- ⁷⁷ Plant (1980), p. 17.
- ⁷⁸ Plant (1980), p. 211; MacIntyre (1973), pp. 1-9.
- ⁷⁹ Plant (2001), p. 299.
- ⁸⁰ Plant (2001), p. 299.
- ⁸¹ Plant (2001), p. 108.
- ⁸² Plant (2001), p. 271.
- ⁸³ Of which he memorably and rightly remarks that “invoking social justice without further qualification takes us virtually nowhere” (*Politics*, p. 118)
- ⁸⁴ Plant (1980), p. 66.
- ⁸⁵ Plant (1980), p. 114.
- ⁸⁶ Plant (2001), p. 219-20.
- ⁸⁷ Plant (1980), p. 35.
- ⁸⁸ Plant (1980), p. 21.
- ⁸⁹ Plant (1980), p. 22.
- ⁹⁰ Specifically *Intention* (1957)
- ⁹¹ Plant (1980), p. 27.
- ⁹² Plant (1980), p. 28.
- ⁹³ Plant (1980), p. 160.
- ⁹⁴ Plant (1980), p. 244.
- ⁹⁵ Plant (1980), chapter 3.
- ⁹⁶ Rowntree (1902), pp. 86-87
- ⁹⁷ Beveridge (1942), para. 27.
- ⁹⁸ Renwick (2017), p. 6.
- ⁹⁹ Plant (2001), p. 295.
- ¹⁰⁰ Deacon (2002), p. 134. See also Deacon (2007), Deacon (2004), Taylor, G. (2007)
- ¹⁰¹ Deacon (2002) p. 18.
- ¹⁰² Deacon (2002), p. 21.
- ¹⁰³ Field (2000), p.46
- ¹⁰⁴ Field (1997), pp. 30-31
- ¹⁰⁵ Field (1995), p. 130.
- ¹⁰⁶ Field (1997), pp. 30-31.
- ¹⁰⁷ Connell, (2011).
- ¹⁰⁸ Field, (1975), p. 2
- ¹⁰⁹ Field, (1996), p. 19.
- ¹¹⁰ Connell (2011), p. 69.
- ¹¹¹ See Filby (2015); Spencer (2011), chapter 11
- ¹¹² <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/103411>
- ¹¹³ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (2013)
- ¹¹⁴ Sacks (1997), p. 63
- ¹¹⁵ Cooper in Farris and Taliaferro (2015), pp. 27-45.
- ¹¹⁶ Cooper in Farris and Taliaferro (2015), p. 30.
- ¹¹⁷ Cooper in Farris and Taliaferro (2015), p. 30.
- ¹¹⁸ Banner (2014)

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¹¹⁹ See, for example, Dawes (2018)

¹²⁰ Kidwell and Doherty (2015)

¹²¹ Davis *et al* (2008), p. 49.

¹²² Loughlin *et al* (2003), pp. 56-62.

¹²³ Glasman in Turnbull (2016), p. 52.

¹²⁴ Atherton *et al* (2011)

¹²⁵ Atherton *et al* (2011) pp. 75-77.

¹²⁶ Brown (2016), paras. 14-16

¹²⁷ Grimley (2004); Brown (2007); Brown (2014); Spencer (2018); Atherton *et al* (2011)

¹²⁸ Maritain (1947), p. 47.

¹²⁹ Maritain (1936), p. 281.

¹³⁰ Maritain (1940), p. 87.

¹³¹ Maritain (1946), pp. 42-3)

¹³² *Centesimus annus*, #11

¹³³ Williams (2009b)

¹³⁴ Williams (2008b)

¹³⁵ Williams (2009a), pp. 187, 194.

¹³⁶ Williams (2009c)

2: “They have themselves to give”: William Temple

Introduction

“There are certain Christian principles alongside of liberty – notably fellowship – which find peculiarly vivid expression in the Beveridge plan.” So William Temple wrote to Major Guy Kindersley, stockbroker and former MP for Hitchin in Hertfordshire in 1943.¹

Kindersley had written to the Archbishop to say he was “profoundly disturbed in spirit” by the announcement that Temple was to chair a meeting at Westminster at which Beveridge was “to speak in support of the proposals contained in his Report.” Temple was writing to justify his actions and calm the Major’s fears.

The Beveridge proposal, according to Kindersley, raises the “greatest of all political issues [namely] the liberty of the citizen and the dangers inherent in the claims of an omniscient State.” He recognised that “any society implies an ‘ordered’ freedom” but went on to reason that “every encroachment on individual liberty by the State should be regarded by Christians with suspicion.”²

Temple’s response was conciliatory. There were indeed “dangers in any such scheme” which should be guarded against. However, he argued, “the dangers on the other side” – meaning freedom from state interference without any commensurate social security – “are much greater”. Indeed, the Beveridge plan could “be so administered as to increase actual liberty” while also instantiating the Christian principle of fellowship that was no less important.

This was by no means Temple’s only written defence of the Beveridge plan, and the Temple Archives at Lambeth Palace Library contain correspondence with various individuals in 1943 and 1944 in which he defended his position and, more loosely, the Beveridge report, which he described, in one letter, as being in “close harmony with Christian ethical principles”.³ The associations between Archbishop and Beveridge – the man, the plan and the welfare state he helped generate – were multiple and close.⁴ Lecturing members of the Bank Officers’ Guild in February 1943, Temple praised the plan for its “universality”, its “national fellowship and unity”, its fostering of the “admirable qualities of thrift and enterprise”, and for the way it expressed “our national fellowship and unity.”⁵ He made a similar argument later that February when he spoke in a House of Lords debate on the Report,⁶ and latterly wrote to Winston Churchill suggesting that he appoint a Minister for

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Social Security to “persuade the country that the whole matter” of post-war social reconstruction “was being faced” as opposed to “being tackled only piecemeal.”⁷

The close association between Temple and the (post-war British) welfare state thus began early and has long been recognised by friend and foe alike. “The Welfare State...owed a good deal to the influence of Archbishop William Temple”, write Trevor Beeson, a self-declared disciple of the Archbishop.⁸ The tradition in the Church “associated with Archbishop William Temple...sees the state as a tool to implement Christian charity”, wrote John Milbank in the *Church Times* in 2011.⁹

The straightforward association between Temple’s thought and the kind of welfare state envisaged by Beveridge and instituted by Attlee’s government has not gone unchallenged. A number of scholars, such as Wendy Dackson¹⁰ and Matthew Grimley¹¹ have outlined a more nuanced account of Temple’s thought which shows that his endorsement of (what was to become) the post-war welfare state was neither wholesale nor inevitable.¹² This chapter develops this ‘revisionist’ reading of Temple, not questioning the sincerity of his qualified defence of Beveridge’s ideas, but paying particular attention to the theological-anthropological underpinnings of Temple’s political thought, and drawing out their political implications in a way that shows they are not simply exhausted by the detailed conclusion of *Christianity and Social Order*.

Temple himself repeatedly drew the link between holding a proper conception of the human person and of the functions of the state. In the third of his Bishop Paddock Memorial Lectures, published as *Church and Nation* in 1915, he spoke of “another formula for describing the justice which we shall desire to practice in the State... [namely] the recognition of personality.”¹³ The State, he remarked in his Henry Scott Holland lectures in 1928, subsequently published as *Christianity and the State*, is primarily “the fosterer of the growth of Personality on which the richness of the common life depends.”¹⁴ In as far as politics and economics study “a certain department of human conduct, which is itself dependant on, and productive of, moral character” (as opposed to being “exact science[s]” like geometry or physics) they are amenable to religion’s conception of the human and the human good, he explained in his Gifford lectures in 1932-33.¹⁵ “We cannot form a theory of society or of the State,” he said, most clearly, in *Citizen and Churchman* eight years later, “until we have formed a conception of human personality.”¹⁶

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That conception, according to an editorial in *The Pilgrim*, a journal of Christianity and politics that he edited between 1920 and 1927, was that “every human being [was] of unique and irreplaceable value, because he is a child of God,” a fact with which any “social doctrine or system” should be in accord.¹⁷ The four ‘Christian Social Principles’ that Temple outlined in an essay for *The Pilgrim* were all grounded in his conception of the person: sacredness of personality, the fact of fellowship, the duty of service, and the power of sacrifice.¹⁸

This chapter will set out a pattern to be followed in the next three, in outlining and analysing Temple’s anthropology in the first half, before exploring what this meant for his conception of the state vis-à-vis its ‘provision’ of ‘welfare’ (both terms become contestable) in the second. Although a great deal has been written on Temple’s political theology,¹⁹ this has been insufficiently linked to his anthropology. This is largely because none of Temple’s best known and most significant intellectual influences – his philosophical idealism²⁰, his Christian socialism,²¹ or his commitment to the idea of a national church with national moral responsibility²² – treated theological anthropology as a major concern.

That recognised, from his Oxford lectures of 1910, published the following year as *The Nature of Personality*, through his Pilgrim editorials and *Christianity and the State* in the 1920s, various minor writings of the 1930s,²³ to *Christianity and Social Order* published in 1942, the concept of *personality* and, more broadly, a rich understanding of the human person, is discernible within Temple’s thinking. I will draw out this ‘personalistic’ strand (although the term itself is slightly inaccurate and anachronistic for Temple), which has heretofore been underappreciated in the literature on Temple’s political theology, by analysing four key, relevant dimensions within his theological anthropology: freedom, fellowship, gift, and sin. I will then go on, in a pattern that is followed in subsequent chapters, to demonstrate how this theologically-grounded understanding of the human person informed Temple’s conceptualisation of the state, and in particular its responsibility for welfare. In particular, I will emphasise as a key theme the idea of the human person being made through, for and finding fulfilment in ‘gift’ which, again, has been only tangential in the literature on Temple, and which, as with Maritain, John Paul II and Rowan Williams, offers, I believe, the key anthropological insight within Temple’s political theology.

Temple's theological anthropology

Both the lectures that were published as *The Nature of Personality*, and *The Pilgrim* editorials that latterly formed the first section of *Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects* offer structures for understanding Temple's anthropology. The former sets out a scheme whereby human personality is grounded in its unique awareness of *temporal reality*, which enables a *freedom*, which when harnessed to *purpose* generates *character*. The latter, as noted above, sets out principles of *sacredness*, *fellowship*, *service*, and *sacrifice* that recur, albeit modified, in Temple's writings, in the process offering a bridge between his idea of the person and of the kind of principles to which state and society should attend.²⁴ The following analysis of Temple's theological anthropology draws from and modifies both of these schema, and introduces another element, that of human sinfulness, which emerges as a significant, if sometimes ambiguous, factor in both his anthropological and political thought.

Persons as free and self-determining

Temple claimed in *The Pilgrim* that a "man's value" was not merely to himself or to society but to God, and that any true social doctrine or system would necessarily recognise and respect the "unique and irreplaceable" value of all people.²⁵ "Every degraded wretch of whom society despairs is a soul that God created as an object of His love, and died...to win to loving fellowship with Himself." He made a similar point in *Citizen and Churchman*, when he wrote that there can be no rights of man "except on the basis of faith in God" as "my worth is what I am worth to God".²⁶

For all the obvious significance of this point, however, and the fact that he judges this principle of respect for personality in all men to be "the fundamental" Christian social principle, it is a minor theme in his writing, largely absent in his published work including in his numerous Gifford lectures, *Nature, Man and God*.

A more sustained theme, and the starting point of his exploration of the topic in *The Nature of Personality*, which he pursues in a number of his Gifford lectures, is the way in which consciousness of "continued existence [and] identity" marks out the "person" from (what he calls) the "thing" and the "brute".²⁷ Such temporal cognizance and investment enables "freedom" and "self-determination".²⁸ The person is aware of, attributes value to and has in interest in past and future, as well as the present. He or she is characterised by "both memory and expectation" but is determined by neither "past history [n]or present

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environment.”²⁹ Rather, the person can judge what is good and orient their mental and physical existence towards it. Freedom is “determination by what seems good as contrasted with determination by irresistible compulsion.”³⁰

That compulsion may be internal as well as external. “True freedom”, he remarks in *The Nature of Personality*, “is not only or chiefly a freedom from external control, but freedom from internal compulsion.”³¹ It is also, thus, illusory. In a passage that is strangely redolent of contemporary commentators like Jonathan Haidt,³² Temple wrote that “there is no single will, no one purpose, in me at all”, but that the mind exists in a “state of conflicting desires”, a practical agent “largely consisting of inherited tendencies and shaped by circumstance of one sort or another”: “The individual is no doubt a unity...but he is all manner of different agents, varying according to the tendency or impulse which was last stimulated.”³³ Personality demands true freedom, which entails “perfect self-determination”, where all impulses are satisfactorily brought under “the guidance of Reason”.³⁴ It thus is “nowhere fully realised except in the Godhead.”³⁵ Human will is always in “the process of formation” and “never quite complete”.³⁶ Our character is fluid, malleable, “in process of formation”.³⁷ Properly speaking this means that ‘Personality’ should only be used of “a wholly self-determined being”, in such a way that would effectively “exclude all mankind”. It is simply for the sake of convenience that Temple says he uses it of beings that are not fully ‘personal’ in this sense.³⁸

Persons meant for fellowship

Temple’s firm association of personality with freedom and self-determination might lend itself towards a liberal, even libertarian, anthropology, and thereby a straightforwardly ‘liberal’ – in Esping-Andersen’s sense of the word – welfare regime. That this is not so is underlined by two factors.

The first, mentioned above, is Temple’s insistence that humans are not truly free, in the sense that their will is coerced and compelled by inner conflicts and impulses that distort their self-determination. That being so, “discipline or external restraint” rather than “necessarily diminishing” freedom may be the means of increasing it.³⁹ “Wise legislation” can make people freer. This was the logic behind his letter to Kindersley, in which he argued that policies such as those outlined in the Beveridge plan could “be so administered as to increase actual liberty”.⁴⁰

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Second, there is Temple's repeated insistence that such freedom was justified by and should be oriented towards fellowship.⁴¹ "Self-determination" is "the characteristic of man as a moral being," he said in his ninth Gifford lecture, but only because without it humans "could never be called into fellowship with God." Such self-determination "is not the last word of human development" but rather must "fulfil itself in the recognition of an Other".⁴²

This 'Other' is both divine and human. In *Citizen and Churchman*, the book which sees Temple's enthusiasm for the rights and powers of the state at its zenith, man's "spiritual integrity and his fellowship with God" is the only factor that unambiguously takes precedence over his citizenship. The individual "owes allegiance and obedience" to the State as the "representative and effective organ" of the largest and most inclusive community to which the citizen belongs. It is the "organ for present action", the "custodian" of the community's "tradition", and the "trustee for its future". "All that is purely temporal in the citizen, including his animal life, is rightly subject to the State which acts for the whole community," Temple wrote with unguarded enthusiasm. Only the citizen's fellowship with divine is exempt:

"The State may take his goods in taxation; it may demand that he change his occupation, as when it conscribes men in its armies; it may thrust him into a service involving certain death. Its right over him is limited only by his conscience and his obligation to live in the spirit of fellowship with God."⁴³

While nowhere does Temple cast doubt on the ultimate priority of fellowship with the divine, he elsewhere accords somewhat greater attention and significance to fellowship with other people. Human freedom is oriented to and justified by fellowship with the human, as well as the divine, 'other'. Humans, he states in *The Nature of Personality*, "are born members of society". We have a "strong social instinct, [and] a desire for the approval of our fellows."⁴⁴ Stronger still, he says that a human being "cut off from society is not fully human", and even that "our significance and value are almost wholly derived from our relation to society", a statement that, superficially at least, compromises his belief "my worth is what I am worth to God".⁴⁵

This was a particular emphasis of his Henry Scott Holland lectures, in which he mapped two understanding of human nature on two major "types of political theory". The first was the "Aristotelian" in which mankind is understood as a naturally social animal, and government is "a natural consequence of this fact"; the second was "Social Contract"

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theory, which begins “from the hypothesis of utter and absolute individualism” from which basis men initiated forms of governance through contract.⁴⁶ Temple was uncompromising in his rejection of the latter theory, explaining how “it rests on a view of human nature which is certainly defective in so serious a degree as to be false,”⁴⁷ and how the way in which many Contact Theorists “have identified Society with the State...is... one great heresy”.⁴⁸

Temple had not, at this stage of his career, engaged with Maritain’s work. *Three Reformers* had only been published three years earlier and *True Humanism*, which J.H. Oldham would encourage Temple to read, would not be published in English until 1938.⁴⁹ Temple’s use of Thomistic thought is occasional,⁵⁰ sometimes ambivalent,⁵¹ but broadly appreciative.⁵² Nevertheless, the firmly Aristotelian, rather than Social Contract, predisposition of the Scott Holland lectures inclined him to the Thomistic basis of Maritain’s anthropology and enabled him latterly to appropriate Maritain’s personalistic language to express his long-standing belief in the significance of fellowship. Indeed, as Carter Wood has argued, Maritain’s vocabulary of “new Christendom,” “democracy of the person,” “permeation,” “secular Christian order” was enthusiastically adopted not just by Temple but by a range of British Christian intellectuals during the war and beyond.⁵³

Christianity and Social Order refers to *Rerum novarum*, *Quadragesimo anno* and Maritain’s *Scholasticism and Politics* in its articulation of “freedom” as determined and disciplined by “social fellowship”, emphasising in particular Maritain’s “valuable distinction”, between ‘Personality’ and ‘Individuality’:

“Of course every person is an individual; but his individuality is what marks him off from others; it is a principle of division; whereas personality is social, and only in his social relationships can a man be a person. Indeed, for the completeness of personality, there is needed the relationship to both God and neighbours. The richer his personal relationships, the more fully personal he will be.”⁵⁴

As with his discussion of freedom and self-determination, the implication here, particularly in the final sentence, is that no humans are truly personal, as no humans have flawless personal relationships, either with God or with neighbour. Perfect fellowship, like perfect self-determination, is only realised within the Godhead.

‘What Christians stand for in a secular world’, a late essay by which Temple wished to be judged, also emphasises this understanding of personality, drawing out its political

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implications. Personality is “inherently social”, formed by those groups “small enough to enable each individual to feel...that he can influence the quality and activity of the group.”⁵⁵ Temple is alert to how “much democratic thought” seeks to “eliminate or to deprecate all associations intermediate between the individual and the State.” The “limitless individualism of revolutionary thought” ends up defeating “its own object” and becoming “the fount of totalitarianism”. Directly referencing Maritain, Temple argues that the nation needed to move from “democracy of the individual to democracy of the person”, a form of democracy only sustainable in a society rich with intermediate associations by means of which “personality achieves itself”, such as the family, the school, the guild, the trade union, the village, the city, the county.⁵⁶

Persons as self-giving

The four Christian Social Principles that Temple articulates in his Pilgrim editorial – sacredness of personality, the fact of fellowship, the duty of service, and the power of sacrifice – had, by the time of the Scott Holland lectures in 1928 been reduced to three, Temple noting, in the third lecture, that sacrifice “lies beyond the sphere of political organisation”.⁵⁷

This indicates a decisive shift from the views earlier in his career, as they are discussed by Alan Suggate⁵⁸ and Stephen Spencer⁵⁹, which placed a much greater emphasis on man’s duty to sacrifice himself to and on behalf of the state, not simply for national security in times of emergency as he intimates in *Citizen and Churchman* (and allows with qualification in *Christianity and the State*⁶⁰), but more generally in pursuit of the collective good.

By Temple’s early reckoning, character was developed through “process of asceticism, self-sacrifice and devotion to a noble cause”,⁶¹ within which the state played a crucial and authoritative role. Thus, most dramatically, he pronounced in an early essay entitled ‘The Education of Citizens’, “man has no rights except the right to do his duty... and it is only his presumed determination to do his duty by the State that makes him a subject of such rights as these ... [A man’s] whole being is comprised in the fact that he is a member of the State.”⁶² Tellingly, at the time of the publication of *Christianity and Social Order* nearly 40 years later, one G. Kitching organised the reprinting of the essay. Temple permitted the reissue but described it to Kitching as “a rather undergraduate production” and asked for a note to be enclosed which distanced him from his earlier views of state.⁶³

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Temple became much more cautious and reluctant to cite *sacrifice* as a social principle, stating in his Scott Holland lectures that “the State of our generation has not the same right to sacrifice the essential interests of its community as an individual has to sacrifice his own.”⁶⁴

This important shift noted, the idea that sacrifice – or “self-forgetfulness”, “self-surrender” or giving, to use less contentious words that he deploys to a similar effect elsewhere – is an important element within the development of *persons* for Temple should not be overlooked. Sacrifice may not be something that the state can demand of its citizens, except *in extremis*, but it is something that citizens can and should demand of themselves if they wish to develop their personality.

“Love is the supreme goal of Personality,” he wrote in *The Nature of Personality*.⁶⁵ “Only in Love can we realise ourselves.” But “love is self-forgetfulness”, and can only be “be produced in us by the love or need of another calling out our love.” “It is misleading,” he goes on to say “to speak of self-realisation *through* self-sacrifice [because] self-sacrifice is self-realisation.”⁶⁶ Two decades later, dwelling on the theme of freedom and self-determination that featured so prominently in his anthropology in *The Nature of Personality*, Temple said in Gifford Lecture IX that “self-determination fulfils itself in self-surrender to that which is entitled to receive the submission of the self.”⁶⁷

For all that Temple moved away from his earlier political *interpretation* of this orientation of personality to ‘self-surrender’ – humans may become persons through self-sacrifice but that did not mean they had a duty of self-sacrifice as citizens – the principle retained important political implications for him, as evidenced by the conclusion of, and his reaction to, the report *Men without Work*. In 1933, Temple had convened a group of Anglicans to consider the problems of on-going unemployment and two years later he secured money from the Pilgrim Trust for a detailed study into the work that voluntary services were doing for unemployed.

The final report detailed the physical problems associated with unemployment, pointing out that whilst “higher allowances alone will solve very few problems...low allowances will certainly create them”.⁶⁸ It proceeded to argue, however, that “it would be wrong to attribute the condition of these [unemployed] men directly to unemployment – the real cause of their trouble probably lies deeper”, specifically in the “psychological” and “moral” problems that the report goes on to examine.⁶⁹

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Although circumstances varied, especially between skilled and semi-skilled labourers, the core problem was that work provided for most people “the pattern within which their lives are lived”, and when this pattern is lost “they have thrown on them a responsibility which, in the case of most unemployed men, their working lives have in no way qualified them to bear, the responsibility for organising their own existence.”⁷⁰ Unemployment created a psychological purposeless and listlessness which destroyed character.

Deeper still, however, were the moral problems. Unemployment created financial dependence.⁷¹ It eroded the respectability of the home, in spite of the “outstanding efforts ...made to keep up a respectable home.”⁷² It eroded their “sense of self-respect” and their “attitude towards society in general.”⁷³ And – crucially – it eroded their ability to contribute to society. At no point did *Men without Work* question the need for state social support. When unemployment occurs, it wrote, “it is essential that the men affected should be maintained, as they are, by Unemployment Assistance”.⁷⁴ However, it was clear about its inadequacy, especially if it were a one-way affair. Unemployment Assistance will only be a satisfactory system “so long as there is the recognition in the minds of those receiving it that the ultimate responsibility of maintaining themselves is still theirs.” Some new principle will have to be put into operation, the report opined, “whereby a man is offered the chance to *give as well as to receive*.” In the absence of that, the unemployed man “is losing his citizenship.”⁷⁵ If the fostering of human personality were the final good, the state had a necessary but ultimately insufficient role in this. State intervention could physically support the unemployed, but it was largely powerless to socialise or humanise them.

The impact of *Men without Work* on Temple’s thought was profound, and he wrote in *The Preacher’s Theme Today* (before the report was finally published but after the research had been conducted), that

“I don’t think I ever appreciated, until I looked into this question of unemployment in England, how deeply penetrating are our Lord’s words that it is better to give than to receive. So long as the work undertaken consists of doing things for the unemployed, it is quite unredemptive and leads to no restoration of character. The only experiments...which show that effect on character, are those which invite the unemployed to give what they can for the community... The unemployed have no money to give, but *they have themselves to give*.”⁷⁶

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This self-giving was of a piece with the “self-sacrifice” he spoke of in *The Nature of Personality* and the “self-surrender” he spoke of in the Gifford Lectures. Human personality was developed in fellowship and community, more precisely the kind of community that allowed, indeed required, people to contribute. The principle of sacrifice, that had been one of his core Christian social principles into the early 1920s remained one, because human personality was made for and by self-giving, but the implications of that were best worked through in local communities, associations and fellowship groups, than by and through the State.

Persons as sinful

Temple’s conception of the significance of sacrifice to personality remained constant in his writings, even as its political implications shifted. His understanding of human sinfulness showed greater volatility, growing in significance in his middle and later period.

This understanding was linked to his conceptualisation of progress and providence. In his semi-autobiographical essay, ‘Theology To-day’, written in 1939, Temple wrote of how he and his contemporaries “grew up in a stable world.” It may not have been Christian “in any adequate sense of the word”, but “it professed Christianity”, and assumed its principles and its ethics.⁷⁷ “When I was growing up there was a general sense of security,” he wrote a few years later in ‘Thomism and Modern Needs’. That may have been as “illusory” as the nation’s Christianity but “certain principles” were still accepted, among them the sense that things were gradually improving. “Progress might be slow, but it was certain.”⁷⁸

Temple recognised that such beliefs were rooted in “a most un-Christian belief in automatic progress, which was an inheritance from the Rationalists of the eighteenth century.”⁷⁹ The idea that education and scientific discovery would of themselves produce increasing conformity to the Christian ethical “standard” of life was a truth held to be self-evident. It now transpired that it was neither self-evident nor true. Evil, if once regarded “as a survival from a passing age”, was now clearly more real and more problematic, and redemption more necessary.

Although Temple intimated that he himself was largely innocent of this comfortable progressivism, he was also clear that “we were of necessity infected by [that frame of mind]”.⁸⁰ That ‘infection’ is evident in *The Nature of Personality*. Within these lectures, the human is poised between good and evil, susceptible, but not naturally inclined, to either. On the one hand, the “strict form” of the doctrine of Original Sin makes our natural

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impulses out to be evil; on the other, “moderns” proclaim they are good “and only become evil by abuse”. Surely the plain fact, he asks rhetorically, “is that they are neither good nor evil, but are the material out of which either virtue or vice is to be made?”⁸¹ ‘Falleness’,⁸² for Temple, lies not in any malign inclination of the will but in its weak and conflicted nature,⁸³ unwilling to choose what is right and often swayed to choose what it wrong: “We could be good if we would, but we won’t; and we can’t begin to will it, unless we will so to begin.”⁸⁴

This anthropology may have protected him from some of the more naïvely optimistic prognostications of the time, but it still allowed him to write, in *Mens Creatrix* in 1917, that “we may expect then that the course of history will continue in the future, as in the past, to consist in the conversion of nations, the building of the Christian State, and the incorporation of the Christian States within the fellowship of the Church, until at last Christendom and Humanity are interchangeable terms.”⁸⁵

This view changed from the 1920s. In *Christianity and the State*, he writes of “the evil will of finite beings”⁸⁶ and four years later, in *Nature, Man, and God* states that “there is here an unquestionable bias of tendency to evil in human nature,” and that “Original Sin [does]...not stand for a mysterious doctrine but for an evident and vitally important fact”.⁸⁷

This shift appears to have been catalysed, if not necessarily caused, by Temple’s encounter with Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society* was published in 1932, and although Niebuhr had different targets in his sights, passages of the book could have been written with Temple’s earlier thought in mind.⁸⁸ Temple makes no mention of Niebuhr in *Nature, Man and God* but he does cite him in the Moody lectures he delivered at the University of Chicago in 1935, in which he claims that Niebuhr has “broken new ground with disturbing but (as I am convinced) most salutary effect.”⁸⁹ Temple greeted Niebuhr at the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State with the words, “at last I have met the disturber of my peace,”⁹⁰ and again appeared alongside him at a student conference at Swanwick in 1939 and then commended him to the Malvern conference of 1941, contrasting his thought with that of St Thomas and Jacques Maritain, neither of whom, he contended, had Niebuhr’s appreciation of the power of sin.⁹¹

By the mid-to-late 1930s, Temple’s assessment of human sinfulness was notably darker than his remarks in *The Nature of Personality*, Niebuhr’s more sombre assessment of what human collective action was capable of slowly being confirmed by the deteriorating

political climate in Europe. In his Chairman's Introduction to *Doctrine in the Church of England* published in 1937, Temple wrote how "we have been learning again how impotent man is to save himself, how deep and pervasive is that corruption which theologians call Original Sin. Man needs above all to be saved from himself."⁹² In a similar way, in his *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, his most popular book before *Christianity and Social Order*, published in 1939 and 1940, with reference to John the Baptist's words, "Behold the lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world", Temple tellingly commented:

"How utterly modern is this conception! It is not "sins"... for there is only one sin, and it is characteristic of the whole world. It is the self-will which prefers "my" way to God's... it pervades the universe... no individual is responsible for it. It is an 'infection of nature'...and we cannot cure it."⁹³

It was a note he struck in his private correspondence just as much as his published works, and it went hand-in-hand with an (albeit qualified) renunciation of his earlier ideas of progress.⁹⁴ In a famous letter to the philosopher Dorothy Emmet dated 16 July 1942, which she quoted in her contribution to Iremonger's biography, Temple explained that we must "completely get away from the notion that the world as it now exists is a rational whole." There was a unity in the world but it was not the unity of a picture "of which all the parts exist at once" but of a drama, "where, if it is good enough, the full meaning of the first scene only becomes apparent with the final curtain; and we are in the middle of this." Consequently, he went on, "the world as we see it is strictly unintelligible. We can only have faith that it will become intelligible when the divine purpose, which is the explanation of it, is accomplished."⁹⁵

Temple, at least according to his own assessment, was not given to dramatic changes of opinion, although, as his reaction to the republication of *The Education of Citizens* shows, he was certainly aware of his shifting in focus and emphasis. In the letter to Dorothy Emmet quoted above, he explained how this "particular modification (in my thinking) to which I am feeling driven is not substantial, though I think it is very important." All of it, he believed, was there in his 1933 Gifford Lectures on *Nature, God and Man*, although he admitted that "I don't think the total presentation in that book or in *Christus Veritas* sufficiently gives this impression of a dynamic process and leaves too much that of a static system."⁹⁶ When he wrote in 'Thomism and Modern Needs', that the modern world now had "a profounder understanding of sin", he was undoubtedly speaking for himself also.⁹⁷

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Having been conscious of the human *potential* for sin in his earlier work, human nature poised between and capable of embracing both good and evil, his later work, under the shadow of Niebuhr, articulated a more sombre account of human nature, in which the human will was sinful not because conflicted or incapable of true self-determination, but because it was fundamentally disordered, oriented away from God and neighbour, and towards the self. This had wider implications, most acutely on Temple's formative ideas of providence and progress, but also on the moral potential of collective action and, accordingly, the capacity of the state to enable and develop human personality.

Temple's political theology

That Temple understood there to be a link between the conception of the human and of the proper function of that state has already been shown. Precisely what that looked like is far from straightforward, however. This is partly because, like Rowan Williams, many of Temple's contributions to this question were circumstantial – deriving ultimately from lectures delivered to specific audiences at specific times – and because, unlike Rowan Williams, the wider circumstances in which Temple operated – late Edwardian Britain, the Great War, the 1920s, the Great Depression, the emergence of totalitarian states, and the Second World War – were violently unpredictable and often simply violent. As a result, *Christianity and Social Order*, *Citizen and Churchman*, *Thoughts in War-Time*, and *The Church Looks Forward* and to a lesser extent his *Pilgrim* essays, *The Nature of Personality*, *Church and Nation* and *Christianity and the State* all bear the marks of their particular socio-political moment.

The result is a political theology that, while not merely mirroring the turbulent events of his time, does shift in emphasis. More precisely, drawing in the anthropological considerations that are central to this thesis, Temple articulates two strands of thought concerning the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare, which, while not contradictory, do exist in some tension, and correspond to different elements within the anthropology laid out above.

The first, 'state as *provider* of welfare', is better known because outlined in greater detail and in better known publications. It takes a particular cue from his understanding of persons as free, self-determining and intended for fellowship, and, crucially, living in a context in which the contours of a cohesive Christian nation are reasonably clear. It is instructive that in a rhetorical flourish towards the end of *Christianity and Social Order*,

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Temple answers his own question about the extent to which the “ordering of social life” is inculcating the “principle of Fellowship”, by saying “compared with some other countries...we find in the British people a magnificent unity”. At the time of writing that was arguably true, but it is nonetheless a telling observation, and one that naturally orients his political theology towards Esping-Andersen’s social democratic or Scandinavian vision of welfare in which there is a premium on cultural homogeneity.⁹⁸

The second, ‘state as a *broker* of welfare’, recognises these anthropological characteristics but also pays greater attention to the idea of persons as self-giving but also marked by sin, and emerges with greater clarity in his ‘middle-period’, between the late 1920s and late 1930s. I will deal with each in turn.

State as *provider* of welfare

Christianity and Social Order, published, like *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, in 1942, outlined a programme of social reform that placed upon the state the primary duty for the provision of public welfare and social security. Its final chapter, ‘The Task Before Us’, claimed that Christians were “entitled to call upon the Government to set before itself” a series of six “objectives”, which comprised a conspicuously specific political agenda for an Archbishop, one that only got more so in the “suggested programme” that Temple placed in an appendix to the book.

The programme was grounded in the primary and derivative social principles outlined earlier in the book, the latter – freedom, social fellowship and service – corresponding to the anthropology outlined above. It was so that citizens could enjoy the freedom that allowed them to determine their lives towards fellowship with and service of others that Temple placed upon the state the responsibility to guarantee his six objectives. “Christians have some clues to the understanding of human nature which may enable them to make a more accurate estimate than others of these points.”⁹⁹

Although he is clear that the primary duty of Christians is to work to these ends in their everyday lives, they also have a duty to become aware of social problems and “to demand a remedy” for them.¹⁰⁰ They may not be capable of knowing what the remedy is but they are “entitled”, he writes by way of introduction to his six objectives, to demand that the government pursues these objectives “as steadily and rapidly as opportunity permits”.¹⁰¹ The impression is of a political theology that envisages a competent and beneficent state, advised and equipped with a clear knowledge of the public good, bearing primary

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responsibility for securing the welfare of individuals and families, through planning, regulation, and the allocation of resources.¹⁰²

This was a characteristic of his wartime writings. The Church, he wrote in *Citizen and Churchman*, must point to “permanent facts” with which “the Christian conscience cannot be content”, such as when people live in conditions “which give wholly inadequate opportunities for family life”, when “children suffer from malnutrition”, or when the nation is “disgraced by chronic unemployment”. The Church is both “entitled and obliged” to “condemn” the society characterised by these “evils”, although it is “not entitled in its corporate capacity to advocate specific remedies.”¹⁰³ Its condemnation was intended to stimulate a response, among those who respect the Church’s authority, to seek and to apply the remedy. It was particularly focused on its own members who acted as politicians, civil servants, business men, or trade unionists, who might “modify the customs and traditions of the departments of state or section of society within which they are concerned.”¹⁰⁴ In short, he concluded, “the church lays down principles; the Christian citizen applies them; and to do this he utilizes the machinery of the state.”¹⁰⁵

Summarising the Malvern conference in 1941, he had written how the concern of Christians is “with principles and not with policies...The constant proclamation of principles is the only way, and a genuinely affective way of fulfilling this responsibility”.¹⁰⁶ Opening his speech at the Albert Hall on 26 September 1942, the first of *The Church Looks Forward* lectures, for which he drew an audience of over 10,000, Temple proclaimed “the right and the duty of the Church to declare its judgement upon social facts and social movements and to lay down principles which should govern the ordering of society.”¹⁰⁷ The “function” of Christians was “to watch” politicians, “spurring them on by a criticism of the existing order in the light of our principles and checking them by criticism of their proposals in the light of our principles.”¹⁰⁸

For all that these wartime lectures and publications make it sound as if Temple were prepared to surrender all positive responsibility for the provision (if not the identification) of welfare to the state, retaining for church and Christians only the right to critique, make demands and work through state structures, there remains hints of a different vision of welfare. After all, as he remarked in *Citizen and Churchman*, the state’s increasing concern “with welfare, including the moral welfare, of its citizens”, was in fact moving it on to ground “which is the proper province of the Church,” and this move was not without

risk.¹⁰⁹ “If the Church withdraws from these because the State steps in, it hands over channels of spiritual influence, such as schools and probation work, to secular forces,” he warned.¹¹⁰ The church cannot retain complete control of welfare provision if the State provides the resources, he reasoned, but the result was necessary “co-operation” and “compromise” rather than wholesale surrender.¹¹¹ He struck a similar note in *The Church Looks Forward*, remarking in the fourth of five lectures that “we have got to find the way to effect the real marriage of state control with voluntary enterprise, each welcoming the other and recognising it in its own place.”¹¹²

Even the wartime publications can, therefore, envisage a *mixed* welfare settlement – state and church (and other associations within civil society) negotiating and working together over the provision of welfare which is, properly speaking, the remit of church (and civil society) – even if this is only a minor theme during this period. What is noteworthy about Temple’s political theology at this time, from the perspective of his anthropology, is not the aspects of personhood he carefully integrates into his vision of the state – in particular human freedom, fellowship and sanctity – but those that he bypasses, in particular human sinfulness. For all that he honoured Niebuhr from the later 1930s for his bracing appreciation of the power of sin and, implicitly, for Niebuhr’s attack on the more optimistic hopes of the social gospel, this did nothing to deter him from outlining an extensive programme of (peaceful) social reform involving substantial state planning that ran contrary to Niebuhr’s criticism of “naïve confidence in the moral capacities of collective man.”¹¹³

State as broker of welfare

If Niebuhr’s influence on Temple’s political theology was not profound, nor was it negligible. He, among others, did orient Temple in his ‘middle period’ towards a more pluralist understanding of the state than is evident in his wartime work, one that exists to broker rather than provide welfare. In their own way, these influences, to which we shall turn presently, each developed and directed his existing ideas of personal fellowship and service towards being fulfilled in associational activity, on the basis that it was primarily in these kind of groups that human personality was nurtured, and that it was therefore in the facilitation of such activity that the state found its justification. This was an ultimately piecemeal endeavour in as far as it was less worked through than the vision articulated in his war-time writings. However, the work and influences of this middle period open up in Temple an important, if underappreciated, approach to welfare.

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As already mentioned, Temple's writing was sensitive to context, and this is as much the case during the middle period of his career as for his wartime publications. Two events in the mid-late 1920s were particularly important in this regard. The first was the Coal and General Strike of 1926, which revealed to Temple the depth and bitterness of the divisions at play within industry and society, disabusing him of any naïve impressions of the naturally co-operative nature of the Labour movement, and exposing ecclesiastical interference in politics as potentially naïve and even harmful.¹¹⁴ The event, and his unfortunate intervention therein, was an experience to which he would subsequently refer.¹¹⁵

The second event was the so-called Prayer Book Crisis of in December 1927, when Parliament rejected the Church's revised Prayer Book, twenty years in the preparation, and then did so again six months later.¹¹⁶ This took everyone by surprise, and although the material impact was minimal, the conceptual impact was acute, exacerbating divisions between those who accepted Parliament's right to reject the new book, on the grounds that the nation was Christian primarily because its standards and values were Christian, and those who thought that "Christian values and standards" were not enough and that the Church alone should decide its worship, because it was a divine society from which many fellow countrymen clearly now opted out. Temple had long supported the Church's right to dictate its own worship, and thus its revision of the Prayer Book, but this sat uncomfortably with his conception of a church, nation and state bound tightly together in moral homogeneity. These events set the context for a more pluralist approach to state (and welfare), in which the influence of Niebuhr, John Neville Figgis and R.M. MacIver was evident.

Temple may have openly praised and embraced the dimension of Niebuhr's anthropology that emphasised the profundity of human sin but, as we have seen, that did not translate straightforwardly into his political theology. Temple never believed, as Niebuhr put it in his first chapter of *Moral Man*, that "society is in a perpetual state of war", emphatically rejecting this Hobbesian vision in his Scott Holland lectures.¹¹⁷ Neither Niebuhr's detection of coercion in "all social co-operation on a larger scale than the most intimate social group" nor his relentless assault on "naïve confidence in the moral capacities of collective man" had any significant impact on Temple's outlook.¹¹⁸

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However, Niebuhr's thinking did influence Temple in as far as it drew attention to the need for groups and association on a limited and more human scale. From the outset, Niebuhr drew a "sharp distinction" between the moral and social behaviour of individuals and "of social groups, national, racial and economic."¹¹⁹ There is, as he wrote in a later preface to *Moral Man*, a basic difference between the morality of individuals and that of collectives, whether races, classes or nations. Whereas the former, and indeed small scale and intimate groups, were capable of self-sacrifice, larger groups had "less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others."¹²⁰ No amount of "moral antidotes", "the wisest type of social pedagogy", "patriotism", class loyalty or even "the religious spirit of love" was enough to moralise the group adequately.¹²¹

Truly ethical attitudes are far more dependent "upon personal, intimate and organic contacts" than "social technicians" are inclined to admit, and these are simply absent in large groups, not least nations that are "held together much more by force and emotion, than by mind" and which, because they are so large, have the greatest difficulty in achieving "a common mind and purpose" and are therefore almost invariably "unified by momentary impulses and immediate and unreflective purposes."¹²² Seeing the nation as a vehicle for social justice, let alone love, is riskily naïve.¹²³

Niebuhr's scepticism towards the nation state as a vehicle for social or personal transformation is visible in Temple 'middle-period' pluralist conception of the state, and has affinities with R.M. MacIver and John Neville Figgis who shaped Temple's thought in the '20s as Niebuhr did in the '30s. MacIver was an agnostic Scottish political scientist. He critiqued thinkers like Leonard Hobhouse and Bernard Bosanquet, both of whom had been influential in Temple's formation, for imagining that a complex, nation-wide state such as the UK's could be modelled on the homogeneity of classical Greece city states.¹²⁴ The state was not the same as society and could not determine every aspect of people's lives. Rather, much more attention needed to be paid to the groups that existed below the level of the state. It was MacIver's definition of the state as "an association which, acting through law as promulgated by a government endowed to this end with coercive power, maintains within a community territorially demarcated the universal conditions of social order",¹²⁵ that Temple adopted and adapted in *Christianity and the State*.

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Temple used MacIver's definition of the state but was more influenced by the priest and political philosopher John Neville Figgis. Drawing on the work of the nineteenth century German historian and jurist Otto Gierke,¹²⁶ the ideas of Lord Acton, and his own studies of mediaeval and early modern Christian political thought, Figgis had argued that the personality of corporate organisation was a reality, and not simply as a legal fiction or a concession from a sovereign state.¹²⁷ Society was not "a sand-heap of individuals, all equal and undifferentiated, unrelated except to the state", but rather "an ascending hierarchy of groups, family, school, town, county, union, church, etc."¹²⁸

"What we actually see in the world is not on the one hand the state, and on the other a mass of unrelated individuals; but a vast complex of gathered unions, in which alone we find individuals, families, clubs, trades unions, colleges, professions, and so forth; and further, that there are exercised functions within these groups which are of the nature of government, including its three aspects, legislative, executive, and judicial; though, of course, only with reference to their own members."¹²⁹

Personality, meaning in this instance the personality of individual humans rather than corporate bodies, never emerged "except within one or more social unions", Figgis argued. Personality was "a social fact" and no individual "could ever come to himself except as a member of a society."¹³⁰ That being so, it was critically important to protect and nurture those social unions, in all their forms. "You are not merely John Doe", he wrote in *Churches in the Modern State*, but as John Doe you "may probably be a member of the Christian church by baptism, a Doe by family, an Englishman by [nationality]." All three of the aspects on any one individual's identity are "social institutions, which have grown into you." The person is created by his or her relational associations, whether large (nationality) or small, such as being "a member of a school, an alumnus of a college, a sharer in this club, [or] a president of that."¹³¹

The state could help sustain personality but only by sustaining those groups that sustained personality. Unlike some of his contemporary pluralists, Figgis did not altogether deny "the need for a public power to make and enforce law". Having emphasised the basic reality of groups and corporate identity within society in *Churches in the Modern State*, he wrote how "a strong power above them is needed" to "prevent injustice between them and to secure their rights... to regulate such groups and to ensure that they do not outstep the bounds of

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justice that the coercive force of the state exists.”¹³² Later, in an appendix, he explained how the state existed “to control and limit within the bounds, the activities of all minor associations whatsoever.”¹³³ Thus, a pluralist state, at least according to Figgis, is not a minimal one but a limited one, which recognises, enables and protects associational activity, including the right of groups to constitute and govern their own affairs, rather than one that permits or usurps it.¹³⁴

Temple had significant reservations with both MacIver and Figgis, most acutely over their ecclesiology. MacIver’s concept of the Church as simply another body within civil society was untenable to him. The Church is “not a society which people joined as one might join the Tariff Reform League, or any other organisation with a specific object”, Temple wrote in *The Pilgrim* in 1924, using the same example that Figgis had done in *Churches in the Modern State*.¹³⁵ It was not simply another voluntary association, he wrote in 1941. Rather, its roots, existence and mission were quite different. “It is the creation of God, and men become its members under the impulse of the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Baptism”.¹³⁶

This was closer to Figgis’ conception of the Church, but where Temple differed with Figgis was on how far this Church was distinct from the rest of society. Figgis understood the Church in the light of the “cardinal fact” of the day, namely “the religious heterogeneity of the modern state.”¹³⁷ The Church was independent of contemporary society, which was “organised on a basis [that was] frankly secular”.¹³⁸ Its duty was to “show forth to the world the truth of our being ‘separated’, set apart, a city on a hill, something *distinct* in aim and purpose.”¹³⁹ For Temple, who was committed to the idea of a national church serving the nation as a whole, and alert to the need for a national, spiritual centre of gravity, this was insufficient. As he wrote in *The Pilgrim*, “there must be a spiritual society interlaced with the secular society keeping it true to its highest ideals.”¹⁴⁰ Or, elsewhere in the same publication, “all our welfare depends on rapidly establishing the Christian background of economic life.”¹⁴¹ Temple’s ecclesiology was thus a subtle but important influence on his view of the state, undermining the pluralism to which Niebuhr, MacIver and Figgis drew him. Nevertheless, as Matthew Grimley has written, because pluralism “was a critique of the state, not a theory of the state... a habit of thinking, rather than a programme,” Temple “could never shake it off altogether, and pluralist perspectives kept breaking through.”¹⁴²

This was visible in the later 1910s when he wrote, in *Mens Creatrix*, that the state must remember that “it exists by no other right of title than that of all associations of men,” and

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is therefore bound “to recognise ‘Personality’ equal in essence to its own in all associations or corporate bodies within itself, whether they be religious, educational, economic of any other type.”¹⁴³ Tellingly, he went on to observe in a footnote that he had been reading Figgis and Maitland’s translation of Gierke.

Temple’s pluralist perspective receives its fullest treatment, however, a decade later in his Scott Holland lectures. In these, Temple called Hegel’s treatment of the national State a kind of “incarnation of the Absolute” “bewildering”, going on to say that although his English disciples, at whose feet Temple had once sat, may not have followed their master “in his virtual deification of the State”, they were “not far behind”.¹⁴⁴ Mankind might have been a naturally social animal, his personality formed by community, but community was not the same thing as the state. “Under the influence of an *a priori* theory which identifies them, men have attributed to the State what in fact Society was achieving not only without, but even despite, the action of the State.”¹⁴⁵

Early in his chapter on the internal relations of the state, Temple mentions the early modern Calvinist political philosopher Johannes Althusius, a thinker of central importance to contemporary pluralists. Althusius understood the state as a “*consociatio consociationum*”: “its units are not individuals, but the family, the town, the province; and each of these has rights of its own anterior to the State as being part of the foundation of the State”.¹⁴⁶

Temple calls Althusius “the natural starting-point of modern inquiry” because he was the first modern political theorist to revive “the mediaeval idea of the *communitas communitatum* in a form adapted to the new world which was being born in his generation.”¹⁴⁷

The influence of Figgis and behind him Gierke is discernible here. Like Figgis, Temple saw associational life as prior and superior to the state.¹⁴⁸ Precisely because the state’s instrument is coercive rather than persuasive, “the State serves best when it provides the liberty and order on which other associations can build, and by which they seek more intimate or more particular ends,” Temple writes quoting MacIver’s *The Modern State*.¹⁴⁹

Temple’s Gifford lectures had an altogether different focus from his Scott Holland ones, although they touched briefly, in lecture seven, on the relevant question of the balance between universal moral obligations and local, immediate loyalties. The main task of each man’s moral life, he said in the lecture on moral goodness, is “to secure that his own self counts for no more with him than anyone else’s”, a goal that is achieved by following “the

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sound principle of checking each narrower loyalty by what is wider.” However, he goes on to recognise that “a man cannot do much to serve humanity as a whole directly” but must “give his service to his own unit”, although, not, importantly as a cost to larger social units. A man should “serve his family, but not at cost to his country, and will serve his country, but not as cost to mankind.”¹⁵⁰

It was *Men without Work* again, with its empirical observations of the value of mutual contribution and self-giving to personhood, which steered Temple’s pluralistic personalism into its most concrete and political form. As already noted, this report revealed how the moral, psychological and physical impact of unemployment varied from one location to another, not simply on account of the level of material state support but because some areas had a richer and more robust associational life than others. In Leicester, for example, those men who had maintained membership of the Boot and Shoe Operatives’ Union in spite of being out of work for years, were the most respectable, “not necessarily keeping up fancy domestic standards, but feeling, as it seemed, that solidarity with those with whom they had once worked gave them a sort of independent status in relation to the community as a whole”.¹⁵¹ Similarly, the unemployed of South Wales often avoided the desperation of their English counterparts on account of their rich tradition of chapels, trades unions, and choirs, which were absent or greatly diminished elsewhere.

Crucially, associational life could do this whereas the state could not. *Men without Work* remarked how “a gathering of unemployed men may be often heard speaking of the State’s duty to maintain the unemployed.” The report went on to ask pointedly, “What is their duty in return?”, worrying that “at present that question is unanswerable”, and that “unless some sense of duties and obligations can be built up to replace the old that are disappearing, a very serious situation will be created.”¹⁵² It was such duties and obligations that fortified personality. Crucially, however, these were much more readily located in voluntary and associational life than between the individual and the state.

Men without Work reported after the crisis of depression and unemployment had passed but nonetheless made an impact on Temple’s thought, building on his pluralistic inclinations but drawing out in particular the participatory and even self-sacrificial aspects of Temple’s anthropology. “It cannot be too strongly emphasised,” he wrote in a letter to the *Times*, that the help for the unemployed which proved “really redemptive and recreative of character” was not the kind of help which simply did things *to* or *for* them but, rather, that

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which “enabled them to realise themselves and fulfil their function as members of the community,” and crucially “of whom the community has need.” The “greatest evil” and “bitterest injury” of their state, he added, is not “the animal grievance of hunger or discomfort, not even the mental grievance of vacuity and boredom; it is the spiritual grievance of being allowed no opportunity of contributing to the general life and welfare of the community.”¹⁵³

People needed to be needed; needed to feel that they were capable of, indeed required to make a contribution to their immediate common life. Their “personality” required a certain level of material security but this was necessary rather than sufficient. They needed to be part of and belong to a wider community but, importantly, to give of themselves to the good of that community. This was Niebuhr’s “personal, intimate and organic contacts,” and Figgis’ “vast complex of gathered unions” within MacIver’s state as “demarcate[ing] the universal conditions of social order”.

This view is certainly present in *Christianity and Social Order*, as intimated, but is occluded somewhat by that book’s greater emphasis on the role of the state. “Liberty is [made] actual in the various cultural and commercial and local associations that men form,” Temple wrote in his chapter on derivative Christian Social Principles, in which his defence of associational life was clearest.¹⁵⁴ People “actually constitute one another” by their “mutual influence”. This mutual influence finds its first “field of activity” in the family, and thereafter “in school, college, Trade Union, professional association, city, county, nation, Church.”¹⁵⁵ The State that would “serve and guard” liberty would foster all such groupings, “giving them freedom to guide their own activities provided these fall within the general order of the communal life and do not injure the freedom of other similar associations.”¹⁵⁶ According to these principles, the State was, or should be, the “Community of Communities – or rather the administrative organ of that Community”, society being populated by “subordinate functional Councils”, such as those first described in *Christianity and the State*.¹⁵⁷

The limitations of the ‘corporative state’

Christianity and the State laid out no “task before us” and had no appendix of specific recommendations to the government of the day. There is very little in the lectures that lends itself to a specific understanding of what Temple’s more pluralist state might entail. This, it should be recognised, was a characteristic of Temple, rather than these lectures. *Christianity and Social Order* was the exception rather than the rule. Even when, years

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earlier, he had been active in the Labour movement, Temple was always more comfortable denouncing the heartlessness of Victorian liberalism and political economy, and appropriating the intellectual architecture and language of socialism, than in promoting any specific policies. Christian politics required the replacement of the “competition... [that] pervades the whole of our life [and] is simply organized selfishness” with the spirit of co-operation or, more theologically, of fellowship, he wrote in his early book *The Kingdom of God*.¹⁵⁸ It did not necessarily require the nationalisation of land, mines, railways, shipping, armaments, and electric power, such as was called for immediately in the Labour Party’s 1918 manifesto.

In addition to this, however, Temple never articulated a vision of the state as a *broker* of welfare, by protecting, encouraging and partnering with associations of civil society, in the detail he did for the state as a *provider* of welfare in *Christianity and Social Order*, because, as Grimley rightly observed, the pluralism of Figgis and MacIver only ever tempered his thought.

Temple argued that the state was “an organ of community”, deriving existence and “conditional authority” from it, meriting no loyalty other than that which is proper to “the national community”.¹⁵⁹ The state was servant not master of the community. This did not, however, necessitate an overtly antagonistic attitude. On the contrary, the state remained necessary to the community. In the final chapter of *Christianity and the State*, detailing “the state in its external relations”, Temple argued the state “is the only necessary organ of the community” and its collapse likely “to break up the community itself”. It was thus perfectly reasonable to see it as “the organ of national unity...so closely bound up with the community that it has almost as irresistible a claim as the community itself.”¹⁶⁰

Temple saw the richness and security of this natural associational life as demanding a state that was more substantive and active than Figgis had been content with. “The more complex our associational life becomes, the more important is that universal Law which the State upholds. Only if the general fabric is firm and reliable is there freedom for spiritual, intellectual or commercial enterprise.”¹⁶¹ Thus when Temple argued that, rather than being “the guardian of property”, the state is “the fosterer of the growth of Personality on which the richness of the common life depends”,¹⁶² the practical conclusion he draws is that, in addition to protecting property-holders, the state has a duty “to provide that every citizen possesses, or can acquire, some property in which to exercise

rights". "A Christian sociology," he wrote, in call for what sounds like a Citizens' Income, will "desire that every citizen should possess enough property to support bare life even though he does no stroke of work for it."¹⁶³

In addition to this confidence in the state, Temple had reservations about the reality of pluralism, partly derived from his own experience and partly from *Men without Work*. The latter, for all it emphasised the critical significance of associational life, was cognizant of its perils. Associational life, especially when it came in the form of single interest or sectional groups could cut people off from the wider community and did not *necessarily* foster virtues of responsibility and self-help. Temple's own experience, in the very different circumstances of the Coal Strike, confirmed this. Associational life needed a strong state for its own survival and to prevent a truly common good from splintering into a variety of smaller, detached and possibly antagonistic local goods.

Temple touched on this theme in *Citizen and Churchmen* six years later. A community of communities could be as dangerous as a society of individuals, with the units of self-interest simply being bigger and therefore more difficult to negotiate. The events of 1926 cast their shadow here once again. "There is no hope that either side to a dispute will truly aim at justice unless there is an over-arching loyalty which checks, and sets in right perspective, the sectional loyalty which each party feels so strongly."¹⁶⁴ The driving force of sectional loyalty is "very great" and "will not be held in check except by a loyalty equally strong to a fellowship of which members of the opposing party are members."¹⁶⁵

This was the argument Temple repeated in *Christianity and Social Order* when, in the book's appendix, he returned approvingly to Maritain's distinction between 'Democracy of the Person' and 'Democracy of the Individual', which had led some "Christian social reformers" to favour "the ideal of the 'Corporative State'". This, however, "swings the pendulum too far". For all that human personality was fostered by the institutions of associational life, people had to be individuals before they were persons. "No citizen expresses through his activity in various fellowships the whole of his significance." To deny the state any reality beyond the corporate bodies to which it plays host was to undermine its capacity and duty to secure individual liberty. If the state were genuinely to be a community of communities it still needed to articulate what kind of community it was. The almost content-less one of the pluralists was not enough. If the state were to sustain a rich life of communities, it needed some centripetal pull for balance. The state needed to be more substantial. "The

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scheme of the Corporative State”, he concluded, is like that of Individualism or Communism: “unsatisfactory in itself but not without truth.”¹⁶⁶

Over and above such principled objections to the state as mere broker, there were also circumstantial and pragmatic considerations to which Temple sometimes referred, to the effect that a high degree of centralisation was simply unavoidable in the modern world. In a 1935 lecture entitled ‘Faith and Freedom’, he reasoned that “it has been inevitable that the need for planning should lead to an increased activity in the economic sphere on the part of the National State.”¹⁶⁷ A series of “great forces” – the Liberal nationalism of the nineteenth century, the centralisation of (the Great) war, the advent of democracy which invariably begs the question “What people?” – had converged “upon a single result of intensified nationalism”. “When to this cause there is added the stark necessity for corporate planning in the economic sphere, we see how unavoidable in our period of human history in the new prominence of the State.”¹⁶⁸

One might also speculate that circumstances also nudged Temple’s thinking away from the pluralism of *Christianity and the State*. Just as in the mid-late 1920s, the Coal and General Strike, and the Prayer Book Crisis had provoked questions about national homogeneity and the Church’s position within the country, so a decade later a series of powerful social counterweights – George V’s Silver Jubilee, the Abdication Crisis, the Coronation of the devout George VI, the emergence of power states that located their centre of national gravity in party, blood, and messianic leadership – pushed Temple, and wider British thinking, towards the idea of Christian nationhood and “civilisation”, which found powerful rhetorical weight in the war.¹⁶⁹

These considerations, however, were not the cause of Temple’s final scepticism with pluralism, which was principled. The ideas of Niebuhr, Figgis and MacIver and, in a different way, the findings of *Men without Work*, steered Temple’s political theology, without transforming it. He was too deeply informed by a sense of the need for cohesive nationhood, made manifest in multiple cultural, literary, ecclesiastical, social, and political ways, ever to embrace the kind of pluralism that ignored such centripetal forces in favour of a predominantly or wholly decentralised associational life. For all the Temple could agree that the state was a “community of communities”, his final emphasis was on the fact that it was a *community* of communities, a community that was safeguarded by a state that was informed to some degree by Christian principles.

Conclusion

Temple's conception of welfare state is best, but somewhat misleadingly, known through his association with William Beveridge and his wartime publication, *Christianity and Social Order*. This orients our reading of him as understanding the state as best positioned to provide welfare to citizens, often directly.

This, however, is a partial reading of Temple's political theology, light on which is cast by examining his theological anthropology. Temple was clear that a proper understanding of the human had to underpin political thought and practice, and a 'personalist' theological anthropology threads through his writings, albeit without the prominence (or the consistency of vocabulary) of Maritain or John Paul II.

In this, we see how Temple's conception of inalienable human worth, freedom, fellowship, capacity for gift, and sinfulness informs his idea of the state. Not all of these factors are equally significant – his discussion of human worth tends to be brief – or equally consistent – his conceptualisation of the depth of sin fluctuates with circumstance in a way that his understanding of human fellowship does not. Moreover, his conception of the human is filtered through his reading of Niebuhr, Maritain, Figgis, and MacIver, whose ideas on human sinfulness and on the associational nature of the human, inform, if not quite reform, his anthropology.

The result is an idea of state, firmly grounded in four dimensions of human "personality" (his preferred term), which guarantees and provides welfare services, but ideally does so in partnership with the church and other associations and voluntary organisations across society. These, he recognises, are best placed – through their rooted, localised, small-scale, and humanising endeavours – to foster human personality to the greatest extent.

Accordingly, in the writings of his middle period in particular, Temple articulates a clear idea of the state's primary purpose as enabling and protecting the kind of associational life by means of which persons grow and mature; the state, in effect, as a broker for associational welfare. However, he is also conscious of the vulnerability of associational life and its inadequacy in a world that was inexorably politically and economically centralising, and it is this vision, profoundly coloured by the wartime circumstances of his final publications, that are now best known.

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¹ Temple (1963), pp. 91-92.

² Temple (1963), pp. 89-90.

³ Lambeth Palace Archive, W. Temple Papers, Vol. 47, 217.

⁴ Lambeth Palace Library records, W. Temple 5, 19-20.

⁵ Temple (1944), pp. 150-51.

⁶ Hansard; Vol 126, No. 31, pp. 315ff; <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1943/feb/25/the-beveridge-report> (accessed 1 February 2019)

⁷ Lambeth Palace Library records, W. Temple, MS. 4515, 97

⁸ Beeson (2013), p. 114. See also Sentamu (2015) p. xiv; Hughes in Brown *Anglican Social Theology* (2014), p. 97.

⁹ Milbank (2011b)

¹⁰ Dackson (2004). See also Dackson (2006)

¹¹ Grimley (2004)

¹² Brown (2014)

¹³ Temple (1915), pp. 80-88.

¹⁴ Temple (1928), p. 97.

¹⁵ Temple (1934), pp. 33-34.

¹⁶ Temple (1941), p. 26.

¹⁷ Temple (1927), p. 9.

¹⁸ Temple (1927), pp. 9-19. See also in Temple, (1924), pp. 203-07, and Temple (1926), pp. 66-68.

¹⁹ See, for example, Brown (2007); Carmichael and Goodwin (1963); Kent (1992); Preston (1981); Spencer (1992); Spencer (1992); Suggate (1987)

²⁰ Temple (1940), p. 97-110. See also Rogerson (1981), p. 324; Suggate (1987), p. 15.

²¹ Norman (1976), p. 282, Norman, it should be noted, is critical to the point of contemptuous of the Christian Socialist tradition and of Temple at this stage of his political thought, and needs to be treated with a little caution here.

²² Temple, (1915), p. 44; Iremonger (1948), p. 93.

²³ Temple (1936), Temple (1936), Men without Work (1937), Doctrine in the Church of England (1937).

²⁴ Temple (1928), p. 138; Temple (1942) pp. 67-77.

²⁵ Temple (1928), p. 9.

²⁶ Temple (1940), p. 74.

²⁷ Temple (1911), p. 18.

²⁸ Temple (1911), pp. 7-11.

²⁹ Temple (1934), p. 399.

³⁰ Temple (1934), p. 229.

³¹ Temple (1911), p. 31.

³² Haidt (2013), esp. pp. 52-71

³³ Temple (1911), p. 43.

³⁴ Temple (1911), p. 32.

³⁵ Temple (1911), p. 5.

³⁶ Temple (1933), p. 235.

³⁷ Temple (1911), p. 33.

³⁸ Temple (1911), p. 17.

³⁹ Temple (1911), p. 32.

⁴⁰ Greenleaf (1983), pp. 103-189.

⁴¹ Temple (1927), p. 1.

⁴² Temple (1933), p. 244.

⁴³ Temple (1941), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴ Temple (1911), p. 49.

⁴⁵ Temple (1911), p. 62; Temple (1940), p. 74.

⁴⁶ Temple (1929), pp. 43-45.

⁴⁷ Temple (1929), pp. 84.

⁴⁸ Temple (1929), p. 45.

⁴⁹ See Wood in Heynickx and Symons (2018)

⁵⁰ Specifically, it is limited to *Christianity and Social Order*, his 1943 address to the Aquinas Society (published in *Blackfriars* the following year as 'Thomism and Modern Needs') and his 1944 essay 'What Christians stand for in a secular world'.

⁵¹ Temple (1934), p. 405.

⁵² Temple (1958), pp. 230-31.

⁵³ See Wood in Heynickx and Symons (2018)

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- ⁵⁴ Temple (1942), p. 71.
- ⁵⁵ Temple (1958), p. 247.
- ⁵⁶ Temple (1958), p. 247.
- ⁵⁷ Temple (1928), p. 138.
- ⁵⁸ Suggate (1987)
- ⁵⁹ Spencer (1992), pp. 61-73.
- ⁶⁰ Temple (1928), p.156.
- ⁶¹ Suggate (1987), p. 16.
- ⁶² Temple (1905), pp. 4-5. See Spencer (1992), p. 68.
- ⁶³ W. Temple Papers, Vol. 47, 91-92.
- ⁶⁴ Temple (1928), p. 152; emphases added.
- ⁶⁵ Temple (1911), p. 76. See also Temple (1934), p. 263.
- ⁶⁶ Temple (1911), p. 77; emphases original.
- ⁶⁷ Temple (1934), p. 244.
- ⁶⁸ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 133.
- ⁶⁹ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 138.
- ⁷⁰ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 149.
- ⁷¹ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 184.
- ⁷² *Men without Work* (1938), p. 190.
- ⁷³ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 180.
- ⁷⁴ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 200.
- ⁷⁵ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 200; emphases added.
- ⁷⁶ Temple (1936), pp. 81-2. Emphases added.
- ⁷⁷ Temple (1940), p. 100.
- ⁷⁸ Temple (1958), p. 229.
- ⁷⁹ Temple (1940), p. 95.
- ⁸⁰ Temple (1940), p. 95.
- ⁸¹ Temple (1911), p. 29.
- ⁸² Temple (1911), p. 38.
- ⁸³ Temple (1911), p. 39-41.
- ⁸⁴ Temple (1911), pp. 38-39.
- ⁸⁵ Temple (1917), p. 332.
- ⁸⁶ Temple (1928), p. 37-39.
- ⁸⁷ Temple (1934), p. 363.
- ⁸⁸ The book was an attack, Niebuhr wrote, on those moralists, both religious and secular, who imagine that “the egoism of individuals is being progressively checked by the development of rationality or the growth of a religiously inspired goodwill”.
- ⁸⁹ Temple (1936), p. 74
- ⁹⁰ Fox (1985), p. 180.
- ⁹¹ Temple (1958), p. 233.
- ⁹² *Doctrine in the Church of England*, pp. 16-17.
- ⁹³ Temple (1939), p. 24.
- ⁹⁴ Temple (1963), p. 29, Temple (1958), p. 234, Spencer (1992).
- ⁹⁵ Iremonger (1948), pp. 537-38.
- ⁹⁶ Iremonger (1948), pp. 537-58
- ⁹⁷ Temple (1958), p. 233.
- ⁹⁸ Temple (1940), pp. 93-96.
- ⁹⁹ Temple (1942), p. 61.
- ¹⁰⁰ Temple (1942), p. 96.
- ¹⁰¹ Temple (1942), p. 96.
- ¹⁰² Temple (1942), p. 106-11.
- ¹⁰³ Temple (1941), p. 82.
- ¹⁰⁴ Temple (1941), p. 82.
- ¹⁰⁵ Temple (1941), p. 82.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Malvern Conference* (1941), p. 218.
- ¹⁰⁷ Temple (1944), p. 105.
- ¹⁰⁸ Temple (1944), p. 133.
- ¹⁰⁹ Temple (1941), p. 12.

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- ¹¹⁰ Temple (1941), p. 59.
- ¹¹¹ Temple (1941), p. 59.
- ¹¹² Temple (1944), p. 135.
- ¹¹³ Niebuhr (1932), p. xvi.
- ¹¹⁴ Grimley (2004), pp. 103-39.
- ¹¹⁵ Temple (1941), p. 77.
- ¹¹⁶ Grimley (2004), pp. 140-71.
- ¹¹⁷ Niebuhr (1932), p. 14.
- ¹¹⁸ Niebuhr (1932), p. 4, xvi.
- ¹¹⁹ Niebuhr (1932), p. ix.
- ¹²⁰ Niebuhr (1932), p. xi.
- ¹²¹ Niebuhr (1932), p. 15, 20, 61, 48.
- ¹²² Niebuhr (1932), p. 20, 59, 32
- ¹²³ Niebuhr (1932), p. 49.
- ¹²⁴ Grimley (2004), p. 56.
- ¹²⁵ MacIver, (1926), p. 22.
- ¹²⁶ Figgis (1913), p. 55. See also Hirst (2000), p. 110 and Hirst (1989), p. 17.
- ¹²⁷ Hirst, (1989), p. 16-21.
- ¹²⁸ Figgis (1913), p. 87.
- ¹²⁹ Figgis (1913), p. 70.
- ¹³⁰ Figgis (1913), pp. 70-1.
- ¹³¹ Figgis (1913), p. 89.
- ¹³² Figgis (1913), p. 90.
- ¹³³ Figgis (1913), p. 251.
- ¹³⁴ Hirst (1989), p. 29, and Hirst (2000), p. 112.
- ¹³⁵ Temple (1927), p. 23.
- ¹³⁶ Temple (1941), p. 40.
- ¹³⁷ Figgis (1913), p. 113.
- ¹³⁸ Figgis (1912), p. 75.
- ¹³⁹ Figgis (1910), p. 44.
- ¹⁴⁰ Temple (1927), p. 78.
- ¹⁴¹ Temple (1927), p. 29.
- ¹⁴² Grimley (2004), p. 102; Hirst (1989), pp. 8, 15.
- ¹⁴³ Temple (1917), p. 224.
- ¹⁴⁴ Temple (1928), pp. 81-82.
- ¹⁴⁵ Temple (1928), p. 106.
- ¹⁴⁶ Temple (1928), p. 94.
- ¹⁴⁷ Temple (1928), p. 95.
- ¹⁴⁸ Temple (1928), p. 108.
- ¹⁴⁹ Temple (1928), p. 114, quoting MacIver (1926), p. 20.
- ¹⁵⁰ Temple (1934), p. 192.
- ¹⁵¹ *Men without Work* (1938), p. 195.
- ¹⁵² *Men without Work* (1938), p. 193.
- ¹⁵³ Quoted in Iremonger (1948), p. 440.
- ¹⁵⁴ Temple (1942), p. 70.
- ¹⁵⁵ Temple (1942), p. 70.
- ¹⁵⁶ Temple (1942), p. 70.
- ¹⁵⁷ The idea of a “community of communities” permeated the British political mind in the early years of the century partly (a) through the Guild Socialist movement which was reacting against Fabian-style authoritarianism and collectivism; partly (b) through the Taff Vale case of 1901, which held that unions were liable for employers’ loss of profits due to strike action, thereby treating the group as if it were endowed with full legal personality (Figgis highlights this in chapter 7 of his *Churches in the Modern State*); and partly (c) through the 1900 translation of Gierke’s *Political Theories of the Middle Ages* by F.W. Maitland and Figgis himself.
- ¹⁵⁸ Temple (1912), pp. 96-97.
- ¹⁵⁹ Temple (1928), p. 124.
- ¹⁶⁰ Temple (1928), p. 161, 121.
- ¹⁶¹ Temple (1928), p. 122.
- ¹⁶² Temple (1928), p. 97.

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¹⁶³ Temple (1928), p. 98.

¹⁶⁴ Temple (1941), p. 86.

¹⁶⁵ Temple (1941), p. 86.

¹⁶⁶ Temple (1942), p. 104.

¹⁶⁷ Temple (1944), p. 111.

¹⁶⁸ Temple (1944), p. 114.

¹⁶⁹ Robbins in Beales and Best (1985)

3. “The body politic... lives on the devotion of human persons and their gift of themselves” : Jacques Maritain

Introduction

Jacques Maritain wrote to William Temple on 18 March 1943 thanking him for his mention of *Scholasticism and Politics in Christianity and Social Order* and remarking, in passing, that he was “especially happy that you indicate your agreement on the discussion between Personality and Individuality”.¹ This distinction lies at the heart of Maritain’s theo-political anthropology and remained a constant in his mature writings, even as he himself shifted political allegiance.

At first appearance, such underlying consistency seems improbable. As John Hughes observed, Maritain’s political writings appear varied to the point of contradictory.² Anti-modernist, anti-liberal, monarchist, neo-mediaevalist, defender of “high papalist views of ecclesiastical intervention in political spheres”, and at one point sympathetic towards the views of the *Action Française*, he became, and is better remembered for being, a champion of democracy, pluralism, religious freedom, human rights, and what James Chappel has termed his “fraternal Catholic modernism”.³ This is not obvious evidence for an underlying consistency.

In reality, the changes were more cosmetic than profound, exaggerated by a shift in rhetoric, from the strident tone of *Three Reformers* (1925) and *The things that are not Caesar’s* (1930) to the more emollient tone of the 1940s and ‘50s. Rousseau and Descartes never stopped being his arch-villains; he just seemed to get less angry about their villainy. From the time he was first introduced to the *Summa Theologiae* in 1908, Thomism was the consistent bedrock of his political theology and there are continuities in his thought – a focus on the human person, the “primacy” of the spiritual, the consequent (qualified) affirmation of religious freedom and antipathy towards secular liberalism – that can remain hidden under his more public allegiances. There was, in the words of Bernard Doering, an “unbroken continuity” in Maritain’s economic thought, the “whole thrust” which was toward “a just and equitable redistribution of wealth,” which, by his reckoning, could not be achieved by either totalitarian or democratic capitalist state.⁴

Arguably the most consistent element within all this was Maritain's insistence that a proper humanistic understanding of state, society and civilisation was centred on the concept of the person. The city exists for the person "whose destiny is God," he wrote in *Three Reformers*.⁵ "Man is by no means for the State. The State is for man", he wrote in *Man and the State*, quarter of a century later.⁶ The Christian's "temporal activity", he reasoned in *Integral Humanism*, is to generate and sustain social structures that have "as their measure justice [and] the dignity of the human person."⁷ All in all, no understanding of state or society is possible without a prior understanding of the person.

This chapter draws primarily on *Man and the State* (1951), *The Person and the Common Good* (1947), *Christianity and Democracy* (1943), *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law* (1942), *Scholasticism and Politics* (1940) and *Integral Humanism* (1936), while also integrating ideas from *Three Reformers* (1925), *The things that are not Caesar's* (1930) and *Freedom in the Modern World* (1933) in exploring the way in which Maritain's theological anthropology informed his political theology and in particular his understanding of the proper function of the state with regard to the provision of welfare. It argues that, an apparent tension in his conceptualisation of individuality and personality notwithstanding, Maritain's 'persons' have a materiality and freedom of autonomy (not the same as freedom of choice) that should be ordered to the ends of personality, through enabling the distinct human goods of communication and gift.

Anthropology

Individuality

Given the centrality of the person to Maritain's thought, it may seem paradoxical to begin with his emphasis on the individual. Yet without recognising Maritain's understanding of the individual, we miss critical elements of his personalism and, in particular, a persistent tension that underlies his articulation of how person and individual relate to one another.

His early book *Three Reformers* places at the door of its three subjects – Luther, Descartes and Rousseau – the sins of modernity, at the heart of which stands an uncritical, subjective and solipsistic conception of the individual.⁸ Luther, we are told, isolated "irremediably what is ourselves from what is 'other', our spiritual vessel from the surrounding ocean."⁹ Descartes is accused of the "sin of angelism" in which human knowledge is judged "intuitive, as to its mode, innate, as to its origin, [and] independent of things, as to its nature."¹⁰ By dint of following "the endless inclinations of material individuality," Rousseau

completely broke “the unity of the spiritual self...nothing but egoism remains and there is no *ego*, but only a stream of phantoms.”¹¹

These three ‘Reformers’ may have been the *fons et origo* of modernity’s isolation of the individual, but they were not guilty of *creating* the concept of the individual. The existence of the human being as *individual* was not, in itself, in doubt or a problem. Rather, the issue lay in the way that the ‘Reformers’ detached the individual from the rest of the created order and imagined that human nature was somehow “self-enclosed or self-sufficient”.¹²

Grounding his argument in his Thomism,¹³ Maritain reasoned that being an ‘individual’ was simply a case of having discrete material existence. The word “individuality” was simply based on the “principle of individuation...by which that which is *here* will differ from what is *there*”, and was therefore used legitimately of “man and beast, to plant, microbe, and atom.”¹⁴ As created beings, humans were individuals in the sense that they had “uniquely distinct determinations with respect to location in space”, a quality that applied just as much to inanimate as to animate things.¹⁵

What that individuality meant for humans depended in part on how it related to “personality”, for unlike ‘things’, human beings were also possessed of personality.¹⁶ This, however, was not always consistently stated in Maritain’s writings, and different metaphors present subtly different conceptualisations of individuality.

Maritain uses several analogies to convey the inter-relationship between individuality and personality in the human being. On several occasions, he argues that the human being is held “between two poles: a material pole... and a spiritual pole”, the former serving as “the material condition and the *shadow*...of personality”, the latter concerning “personality itself.”¹⁷ Human society, he reasons in *The Person and the Common Good* is caught between and shaped by the same two poles.¹⁸ He uses a similar analogy in *Scholasticism and Politics*, where he suggests that human action “can follow either the slope of personality or the slope of individuality”.¹⁹

Such metaphors suggest an antagonistic relationship, in which individuality and personality are locked into a zero-sum game, the human being gravitating either to one pole or the other, following either one slope or the other. This theme runs through his work and is sometimes made explicit, such as when, in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law* he states that individuality and personality “are distinct in each one of us and... create in us

two attractions in conflict within one another.”²⁰ In this understanding, human individuality is characterised by a materiality that humans need somehow to transcend.

Maritain could also use more integrative language and metaphors, however, even within the same text, such as when he insisted in *Scholasticism and Politics* that “I am wholly an individual, by reason of what I receive from matter, and I am wholly a person, by reason of what I receive from spirit”.²¹ Individuality is still materiality, but not the kind of materiality that exists over and against personality. Here the preferred metaphor is not dual poles or alternative slopes but a “painting”, which “is in its entirety a physico-chemical complex, by reason of the colouring materials out of which it is made, and a work of beauty, by reason of the painter’s art.”²² By this account, the relationship between individuality and personality is not one of tension but of complementarity. Humans are individual *and* personal, and the tension comes, in as far as it does, in whether we choose to recognise both the “physico-chemical complex” and “a work of beauty”, or only one.²³

This tension in the relationship between individuality and personality manifests itself in Maritain’s discussions of human transcendence. This is undoubtedly a key aspect of his anthropology, as illustrated by his claim, in *Man and the State*, that human life “has two ultimate ends, the one subordinate to the other: an ultimate end in a given order, which is the terrestrial good...and an absolute ultimate end, which is the transcendent, eternal common good.”²⁴ By his very nature, or more precisely his “liberty”, the human person “transcends the stars and all the world of nature”.²⁵

However, what this means depends in some measure on what the person is transcending. In some instances, this sounds like it is individuality in the sense of materiality. According to Maritain, perfect personality is seen only on earth in those who escape earthly things. He writes in *Three Reformers* “truly perfect personality is only found in saints... [who] have received by grace, what God possesses by nature: *independence of all created things*, not only in regard to bodies but even in regard to intelligences.”²⁶ This might be put down to the generally more animated register of this early book, but Maritain makes a similar point in the much later *The Person and the Common Good*. “Infinitely above the city of men, there is a society of pure Persons, who are at the summit of individuality, but *without the shadow of individuation of matter*...Each one is in the other through an infinite communion”.²⁷ Similarly, in *Christianity and Democracy* he writes how the person is “immersed in the constraints emanating from material nature within and outside man”.²⁸

Contrary to this, transcendence is also used to mean the person finding his or her *telos* with God who transcends the created order, rather than escape from that order. The human person “is ordained directly to God as its absolute ultimate end”, he writes in *The Person and the Common Good*, an ordination that transcends “every created common good”.²⁹ The person’s “proper good” as a person “is achieved in the union of grace and charity with God”,³⁰ or as he expressed it in *Freedom in the Modern World*, it is through communion with pure Personality of the Holy Trinity, in whom “the idea of personality reaches the plenitude of Pure Act.”³¹

In spite of the tension in Maritain’s various metaphors for describing human individuality, and its relation to personality and transcendence, it seems that the ‘integration’ model is closer to Maritain’s true view. For all that certain passages appear to imply otherwise, materiality is not generally treated as something to be escaped from, but rather something to be ordered to the ends of personality. As he says explicitly in *Scholasticism and Politics*, “material individuality is not something bad in itself... what is bad, is to let this aspect of our being predominate in our actions.”³² This lies at the heart of the difference between anthropocentric and theocentric humanism that dominates *Integral humanism*, the former seeing man himself as “the centre of man, and therefore of all things”, thereby implying “a naturalistic conception of man and of freedom”; the latter seeing God as the centre of man, and implying “the Christian conception of man, sinner and redeemed”.³³

Freedom and autonomy

Maritain’s persons are thus individuals, but more than individuals, marked out, in the first instance, by their freedom and autonomy.

Maritain uses a range of words to define this characteristic of personhood: “freedom”, “choice”, “independence”, “liberty”, and “autonomy”, supplemented occasionally by “will”. The word person, he writes in *Three Reformers*, is “reserved for substances which, choosing their end, are capable of themselves deciding on the means, and of introducing series of new events into the universe by their liberty; for substances which can say after their kind, *fiat*, and it is so.”³⁴ The New Christendom for which he argues in *Integral Humanism* must, among other things, respect “the freedom of autonomy of persons, a freedom that is one with their spiritual perfection”.³⁵ “Society’s common work”, he writes in *Scholasticism and Politics*, “has its chief value in the freedom of personal expansion.”³⁶

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Such freedom is apt to be misunderstood. It is not freedom from the constraints of being part of the created order – or, rather, it should not be (Maritain sometimes infelicitously sounds as if it might be).³⁷ Nor is it freedom of choice, *per se*, a distinction (between that and “freedom of autonomy”) he tries to draw in *Freedom in the Modern World*.³⁸ Properly speaking, according to Maritain, the freedom of choice is ordered to freedom of autonomy. Free choice is not an “end in itself” and to treat it as such is to condemn man “to recurrent acts of choice without ever being able to commit himself”, launching him into “a dialectic of freedom which destroys freedom”. Freedom of choice, when untethered from “reason” or any conception of man’s true “last end”, tends merely “to dissipate in indefiniteness and indecision his personality, his freedom, and his capacity for love tends.”³⁹ Contrary to such exhausting and depersonalising deliquescence – and contrary to what “many modern followers” of Kant think – freedom of choice is merely “a prerequisite to moral action; it does not constitute it”. The reason to choose is in order not to have to choose, to embrace willingly the bond of love – “for love is always a bond” – that is the true human end and good.

As one of the parentheses above indicates, Maritain is at pains to stress how his conceptualisation of freedom of autonomy owes nothing to Kant. Indeed, a few years later, in a footnote in *Integral Humanism*, pertaining to his use of the phrase “freedom of autonomy”, he refers readers to his earlier book *Freedom in the Modern World*, in the process pointing out that he uses the phrase “in a sense at once Aristotelian and Pauline, but in nowise Kantian”.⁴⁰

The reason for Maritain’s insistent distancing himself from Kantian autonomy is two-fold. First, Maritain’s conceptualisation of freedom (or autonomy) are ultimately directed to and satisfied by an end that is God. Perfect freedom of autonomy, he writes in *Freedom in the Modern World*, is found in “sanctity”, for sanctity “embraces the freedom... of always choosing the Good”.⁴¹ After all, he reasons, “how can one make a fresh act of choice when one is at last in possession of that which one has chosen in preference to all?” Maritain’s freedom of choice is a vital tool in the development of personality, but “it will not survive before subsisting Good seen face to face”, for to choose something other when one is in that situation is simply to turn away from the person’s final good.⁴²

Second, and closely linked, Maritain is reluctant to ground human personhood in what he calls “Kantian” autonomy, because it is in the *union* of human autonomy and the Good that

human dignity resides. As he says in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, “a person possesses absolute dignity because he is in direct relationship with the Absolute, in which alone he can find his complete fulfilment.”⁴³ Society must be ordered to this understanding of the person – “there is in each human person a transcendent end, to which *society itself and its common work is subordinated*”, as he expresses it in *Scholasticism and Politics*⁴⁴ – and this understanding of the human person is not exhausted by the idea of freedom as autonomy but requires the an understanding of persons deploying their freedom in such a way as to enable communication and gift.

Communication and gift

In his essay on ‘The Human Person and Society’, published in *Scholasticism and Politics* Maritain explains that the “subjectivity” of the person has nothing in common “with the unity without doors and windows of the Leibnitzian monad.”⁴⁵ Such isolation might be the essence of individuality, but it is inimical to personality: “the *person* cannot be alone”.⁴⁶ Rather, personality demands “the communications of intelligence and love”:

“Because of the very fact that I am a person and that I express myself to myself, I seek to communicate with that which is other and with others, in the order of knowledge and love. It is essential to personality to ask for dialogue.”⁴⁷

Communication with the “other” is “essential” to the development of personality. Here again, however, we catch a glimpse of the tension in Maritain’s model of individuality and personality. He reasons, in *The Person and the Common Good*, that “personality tends by nature to communion” in two ways.⁴⁸ The first of these is “its inner urge to communications of knowledge and love.” This is a natural and good human inclination, one that sees the human person “overflow into social communications” in those two key areas, knowledge and love. The second, however, sounds a slightly different note, namely “because of its needs or deficiencies, *which derive from its material individuality*.”⁴⁹ We appear to see here an example of how material individuality is a *deficiency* rather than a sufficient foundation for personality itself, thereby turning communication from a natural outpouring of the person’s orientation to communion to being a palliative for the individual’s material incompleteness.

Maritain uses the formulation of “knowledge and love” to describe the substance of human communion on several occasions, the first of this pair indicating the exchange of that which we know about ourselves and the world, the second indicating the gift of self itself to

the other.⁵⁰ Love, he writes, aims at the “centre”, the “deepest reality, the most substantial, hidden, existing reality in the beloved”. This centre is “inexhaustibly a source of existence, of goodness and action, capable of giving and of giving itself.”⁵¹ “In order to be able to give oneself,” Maritain reasons, “one must first exist... as a thing which subsists and which by itself exercises existence.”

This essential connection between personality, love and self-giving is underlined in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, in which Maritain writes of “the radical generosity inscribed within the very being of the person” and describes how it is “through love [that man] can give himself freely to beings who are, as it were, other selves to him.”⁵² He also offers more concrete examples of what it means later in the same essay in *Scholasticism and Politics*, when he explains that “when man gives his life for the community’s sake, he accomplishes through an act of such great virtue, the moral perfection by which the person asserts his supreme independence as regards the whole.”⁵³ It is through complete self-giving of this nature, even to the point of sacrifice, that the personality is made perfect. The parallel with Temple’s view, articulated for example in *The Nature of Personality*, that “self-sacrifice is self-realisation” will be apparent.

A still more specific example is offered in a later essay in that collection, ‘Action and Contemplation’, in which Maritain draws the reader’s attention to the capacity for the structures of work and society to foster or undermine personality. Thus, for example, “you can give high wages to a workman for work manifestly useless – for instance, the task, which used to be imposed on convicts, of digging holes and then filling them up – and this workman will be driven to despair. It is essential to human work that it be useful to men.”⁵⁴ This is a telling example, not simply because it comes close to the empirical findings of *Men without Work*, and Temple’s theological reflections thereon, but also because it again reveals how the idea of personality as fostered by communication and gift can manifest itself in social and economic reality. As far as Maritain is concerned, this is no peripheral issue. “Man is both *homo faber* and *homo sapiens*, and he is *homo faber* before being in truth and actually *homo sapiens*,” he writes in the same essay.

An important consequence of this understanding of the person as formed by communication and gift is Maritain’s recognition of the fluidity inherent in personality. Whereas the individual is a fixed entity, the “freedom of autonomy”, such as Maritain describes at the heart of personality, is not, and is capable of development or retardation.

Contrary to Rousseau, in *Three Reformers*, “man is not born free⁵⁵, he becomes free; and he only gains his liberty on condition that he serves.”⁵⁶ “Just as he is at the lowest level of intellectual beings,” Maritain says in *Freedom in the Modern World*, “so is he also the lowest level of personality...personality in the case of man is precarious and always in peril and must be achieved by a kind of progress.”⁵⁷ A truly Christian humanism, he writes in *Integral Humanism* “does not immobilise man, either for good or evil... but [acknowledges that] in his inwards and spiritual being, man is still a nocturnal sketch of himself, and that before attaining to his true lineaments – at the end of time – he will have to pass through many moltings and renewals.”⁵⁸ In several essays in *Scholasticism and Politics* (‘The Human Person and Society’ and ‘The Thomistic Idea of Freedom’⁵⁹) he emphasises the dynamic nature of personality and that, accordingly, “the human person, he is but a person in embryo... Man must win his personality, as well as his freedom.”⁶⁰

Sin

Despite the fact that Temple critiqued the Thomistic tradition for not adequately conveying “the awful pervasiveness and penetrating potency of sin in all departments of human life”,⁶¹ he shared something of Maritain’s conception of human sinfulness. Temple critiqued the “Continental Reformers” for having so interpreted the Fall of Man as to leave in fallen human nature “no capacity for recognising divine truth [and] all faculties vitiated”, a position that found its “logical expression in the doctrine of Karl Barth.”⁶² Maritain similarly bemoaned how under Calvinism “there is no longer any free will, it has been killed by original sin”, and complained of the “primordial antihumanism” of “the Barthian position”, which in essence effected “a doctrine of annihilation of man before God.”⁶³

If Maritain had no sympathy with the idea of total human depravity, he was equally withering about the “romantic optimism” which ascribes to the people “a judgement which is always just and instincts which are always right.”⁶⁴ As early as *Three Reformers* in 1925, he wrote that “it is a flagrant absurdity...to treat men as if they were perfect, and the perfection which has to be acquired...as a constituent of nature itself.”⁶⁵ “It is difficult not to perceive in the work of Freud a punishment,” he wrote in an essay on ‘Freudianism and Psychoanalysis’ in *Scholasticism and Politics*, a punishment that was inflicted “upon the pride of that conceited, pharisaic personality, which rationalism had built up as an end supreme in itself.”⁶⁶

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Between these two poles of ‘Barthian anti-humanism’ and ‘Romantic optimism’, it is not always clear whether Maritain associates sin with human individuality (or, more precisely, with the result of undue and wilful dwelling on individuality at the expense of personality), or whether he sees it as something fundamentally *alien* and sinister to the human condition, even an active force within human history.

Maritain raises the possibility of this latter option in *Freedom in the Modern World*, with “a serious question which we venture to call the question of the Evil One as an actor in history...the devil hang[ing] like a vampire on the side of history.”⁶⁷ This is not a theme one hears much of in his writings, and he openly rejects what he calls “a *satanocratic* conception of the world and of the political city” in *Integral Humanism*, arguing that it “amounts finally to regarding nature and its external structures as abandoned by God to the principate of the devil.”⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the possibility of sin as an invasive, alien presence within the human being, if not an actual agent like “the Evil One”, remains a live one.

In contrast with this, Maritain more often sounds as if sin is closer to a falling short of natural and good human ambitions, rather than the active choice of evil. He writes in *Scholasticism and Politics* that “the nature of human will...necessarily desires – it cannot, as soon as it exercises itself, help desiring – beatitude.”⁶⁹ Evil, he says in *The Person and the Common Good*, arises when “in our action, we give preponderance to the individual aspect of our being”.⁷⁰

On occasion, this can sound as if the wound of sin is not, in fact, that deep and might be successfully treated by educational or political medicine. Thus, for example, he writes in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, that the person is “an animal gifted with reason” but that because the part of “animality” is “immense”, we need “a work of education” to “tam[e] the irrationality to reason”, and “develop the moral virtues [that] must constantly be pursued within the political body.”⁷¹ Similarly, he writes in *Integral Humanism*, in a passage that underlines his difference from Reinhold Niebuhr, that while it is “absurd to expect of the body politic that it make all men, individually taken, good and fraternal to one another”, it is entirely right to seek “social structures, institutions, and laws which are good and inspired by the spirit of fraternal love,” which in their construction “powerfully orient the energies of social life toward such a friendship.”⁷²

Conversely, there are moments when the wound of sin is deeper, both more pervasive and ineradicable. Thus, he writes viscerally in *Christianity and Democracy* – after the war – about

“the immense burden of animality, of egoism and of latent barbarism that men bear within themselves,” a formulation that sounds closer to “the awful pervasiveness and penetrating potency of sin” that Temple found wanting in the Thomistic tradition.⁷³

Maritain’s political theology is, thus, firmly grounded in his understanding of personality, albeit one that is beset by a certain tension over the relationship between individuality and personality and, in a shadow fashion, by a certain ambivalence over the depth and severity of the wound of sin within human nature. Persons are individuals, and although there remains some uncertainty about the extent to which materiality is something to be transcended or not, his most consistent view is that personality simply presupposes the spatio-temporal materiality of being an individual.

Maritain has no doubts that personality is a spiritual good, in the sense that it is fulfilled by communion with God and cannot be fully realised on temporal earth. There is some lack of clarity over how far human sin is an invasive, alien and debilitating factor within this development of personality or how far it is simply part of human materiality. Again, his most consistent view is that sin is not the debilitating anti-humanist force he reads in the Reformed tradition, but a persistent failure inherent in mankind’s animal nature. Either way, he is consistently dismissive of the idea of human perfection or perfectibility, and believes that true human personality is found in the gift of self in communication that is enabled by human materiality and freedom.

Political Theology

Theological anthropology as the criterion for political theology

As noted at the outset of this chapter, Maritain was explicit in his repeated insistence that a true concept of the human person needed to underpin any just and humane state, society and civilisation. There are points in his writings in which he makes that link clear and, indeed, in some instances he draws a direct link between specific aspects of his theological anthropology and certain political ideologies.

Early on in *Freedom in the Modern World*, he emphasises how his conception of human freedom and its capacity to inhibit or foster human personality was a profoundly *political* question, and proceeds to align three distinct “philosophies of freedom” with contemporary socio-political arrangements.⁷⁴ In the first, freedom of choice is an end in itself, generating a polity “that one may call liberal or individualist”. The concentration on this limited conception of freedom, and the attendant confusion of ends and means, means

that “essential values” of “social justice and the common good” are forgotten, and the “absolute right of each part to realize *its* choice tends naturally to dissolve the whole in anarchy”, save only for the “the construction of a positive system of social machinery”.

In the second, freedom of choice is “rightly” abandoned for “freedom of autonomy”, but this is an autonomy conceived “as a type of transitive action, expressing itself in production and control; in material accomplishment.”⁷⁵ Here, freedom “of the individual” gave way “before the grandeur of the common task”, as orchestrated “at the hands of political community itself or of the State”,⁷⁶ meaning, in effect, that ultimate ends are as “imperialist or dictatorial” as those generated by the first philosophy of freedom.⁷⁷

The third freedom, which is grounded on a true understanding of human personality, orders society “not to the freedom of choice of each citizen” (as does the first) or to a narrowly *temporal* common good which is deemed ultimate and sufficient (as does the second) but to a “common good [that] is intrinsically subordinated to the eternal good of individual citizens.”⁷⁸

In a similar vein, although moving away from the explicit question of freedom, Maritain located his conceptualisation of the state between his understanding of the individual and the person. In as far as he is “a *material individuality*”, ‘man’ is part of the temporal state and cannot assert his good over it,⁷⁹ he enters into society “as part whose good is inferior to the good of the whole.”⁸⁰ But in as far as he is a *person*, the state is at his service, ontologically inferior to him and ordered to protect and serve the development of his personality.⁸¹ “By reason of his destination to the absolute, and because he is called upon to fulfil a destiny superior to time...the human person... *surpasses* all temporal societies ... society exists for each person and is subordinated to it.”⁸²

Maritain’s understanding of the person generates a powerful antagonism to (bourgeois) liberalism which can be evidenced in virtually all of his major works throughout this period.⁸³ Such liberalism conceives of the individual “as a little God”; “ground[s] everything in... the absolute liberty of property, business and pleasure”; eviscerates society of any “common task”; reduces “the community to an atomised mass of individuals confronted”; and “inevitably ends in *étatisme*, the hypertrophy and absolute primacy of State”; confronting the individual “with an all-powerful State” or producing “the omnipotence of the state”.⁸⁴ There is no question of its compatibility with the personalist vision of human nature.

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In a similar fashion, the capitalism spawned of liberalism is also dehumanising. Here his criticism is less visceral and concentrated primarily in one publication, *Integral Humanism*. Capitalism, Maritain reasons, is not without its virtues. Indeed, its objective spirit is one “of exaltation of the active and inventive powers, of the dynamism of man and of the initiatives of the individual”.⁸⁵ Its major vice, however, comes from its monetized conceptualisation of the human. Under capitalism, the poor man exists not as a person but “only as an instrument of a production that yields profits”, whilst the rich man “exists only as a consumer (for the benefit of the capital that this same production serves).”⁸⁶ Personality is thus made subservient to capital, and in order to maintain “the monster of a usurious economy”, it becomes necessary “to tend to make of all men consumers.”⁸⁷

In as far as “the effort to deliver labour and man from the domination of money is an outgrowth of the currents released in the world by the preaching of the Gospel”, as Maritain claims in *Christianity and Democracy*, capitalism is anti-Christian and anti-humanist.⁸⁸ Unlike liberalism, however, whose anthropological misconception seems unredeemable, capitalism seems more like the wrong system erected on salvageable foundations. The task is to substitute for an economic system “based on the fecundity of money”, a “‘personalistic’ civilisation and a ‘personalistic’ economy”, with such “reorganisation... on a structural and cooperative principle” needing to come from below “according to the principles of personalist democracy... [and] emanating from them and their free unions and associations”.⁸⁹ The solution to capitalism is not, in other words, to seek a “collectivist” economy, which comprises the third live option that Maritain firmly rejects.

Maritain’s objection to collectivisation – ‘nationalisation’ or ‘socialism’ are better terms because, as we shall note, Maritain in fact commends certain forms of collectivisation⁹⁰ – will be reasonably obvious, as it generates a system in which the conditions for the development of personality are severely undermined, if not altogether erased. He is prepared to acknowledge that “nationalisation” can be “opportune or necessary in certain cases”, and he recognises, in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, that Christians and socialists have made common, or at least proximate, cause in England.⁹¹ However, he also recognises that for all Christianity and nationalisation might seem fellow travellers, there remains a grave “temptation” from “old socialist concepts”, to grant “primacy to economic technique,” and, by the same token, to entrust everything to the power of the State, administrator of the welfare of all, and to its scientific and bureaucratic machinery.”⁹²

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Accordingly, in so far as nationalisation is permissible, Maritain insists that it should also be exceptional, “limited to those public services so immediately concerned with the very existence, order, or internal peace of the body politic that a risk of bad management is then a lesser evil than the risk of giving the upper hand to private interests”.⁹³

In this way, his theological anthropology in/validates various political systems, to a greater or lesser degree. Maritain can, however, be more positive and constructive in outlining the kind of “political action” demanded by his conceptualisation of the person, which he describes in *Scholasticism and Politics* as having a “specific end [in] the common good of the earthly city.”⁹⁴

The communion that is central to Maritain’s conceptualisation of personality orients him away from any utilitarian or aggregative understanding of the good, a point that he repeatedly emphasises.⁹⁵ The good sought through “political action” is not only the material security and comfort of every person – though, as we shall note, Maritain is very clear about the need for this – but the shared good that is inherently relational and cannot be ignored or individuated. At the same time, the temporality of the common good invites humility and self-restraint. While rejecting pessimistic or anti-humanistic views of human nature and potential, Maritain is nonetheless clear that Christian temporal activity “is not to make of this world itself the kingdom of God”, but rather to make of this world “the place of a truly and fully human earthly life”, one “whose social structures have as their measure justice, the dignity of the human person.”⁹⁶ Maritain labels it as “an ultimate end in a relative sense”, as being something that is “intended to foster the higher ends of the human person”, without ever imagining it can be equated to the final human good.⁹⁷

This understanding of the temporal common good leads Maritain towards two more concrete goals, which he describes in *Integral Humanism* as “material and moral development” and in *Christianity and Democracy* as “welfare and freedom”.⁹⁸ The first of these entails a certain level of material security, or, as he describes it in various works, a “progressive liberation from the bondage of material nature”, from “the diverse forms of economic and social bondage”, and “the pursuit of liberation from want, from fear and from servitude.”⁹⁹ The second, by contrast, refers to conditions necessary for relational or associational health, what he describes in *Christianity and Democracy* as “the pursuit of the primary conditions and primary associations which are the prerequisites of a free life”, “of the superior possessions of culture and the mind”, a kind of “human plenitude” that is

perfectly realized “only by great love and the incessant gift of self.”¹⁰⁰ In short, this two-fold responsibility reflects a vision of political action as securing the material and the associational infrastructure to enable the development of human personality.

Precisely what this entails institutionally and how it is to be achieved are not questions that Maritain deals with in any systematic way, although there are pointers throughout his work. Thus, when, in *The Person and the Common Good*, he outlines “that which constitutes the common good of political society”, he lists, somewhat enthusiastically:

“the collection of public commodities and services – the roads, ports, schools, etc., which the organisation of common life presupposes; a sound fiscal condition of the state and its military power; the body of just laws, good customs and wise institutions, which provide the nation within its structure; the heritage of its great historical remembrances, its symbols and its glories, its living traditions and cultural treasures.... it [also] includes the sum of sociological integration of all the civic conscience, political virtues and sense of right and liberty, of all the activity, material prosperity and spiritual riches, of unconsciously operative hereditary wisdom, of moral rectitude, justice, friendship, happiness, virtue and heroism in the individual lives of its members.”¹⁰¹

This is a capacious and, it must be said, somewhat unhelpful list, particularly when it comes to assessing how and by whom the temporal common good is to be sought. Maritain is reluctant to pin his theological colours to any political mast in this respect, repeatedly insisting that the personalistic conceptions he has drawn do not dictate any particular policy or even polity:

“There exists a judgement of Catholicism about the duty to work on behalf of international peace and of the principles of social justice; but this judgement does not suffice to tell me what I should think of the law of the 40-hour week and of the statute of the League of Nations. It is my business to judge these problems as a Catholic...but without pretending to speak in the name of Catholicism.”¹⁰²

This is perhaps a little misleading, however, as Maritain had already written in *Integral Humanism* that it will be necessary “to elaborate a social, political, and economic philosophy which does not simply stop at universal principles, but which is capable of descending to concrete realisation.” This will presuppose “a vast amount of delicate work” but this work, he says, “has already begun; the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI.”¹⁰³ In

other words, for all the necessary trepidation in translating his concept of the personal into specific political ideas and institutions, the message is proceed with caution, rather than not at all, and in particular proceed with a careful understanding of the *structure* of political society that he offers in *Man and the State*.

The Political Structures for Personality

Although Maritain recognises in the opening pages of *Man and the State* that various concepts he explores in that book – community, nation, society, body politic, and state – are “nomadic... shifting and fluid”, he also draws a critical distinction early on which he traces, albeit sometimes faintly, through his discussion.¹⁰⁴ This is the distinction between what is exemplified by “community” and what is exemplified by “society”. The former, he explains, is “more of a work of nature and more nearly related to the biological”; the latter, by contrast, “is more a work of reason, and more nearly related to the intellectual and spiritual properties of man.”¹⁰⁵

The distinction is not, it is important to point out, that one is natural and the other is not. Maritain is clear that, for example, political society (which he also calls the “body politic”) and, within that, the state are wholly *natural* phenomena, the need for humans to organise and establish institutions of political authority being no less natural than the ethnic, geographical or linguistic solidarities around which communities form.

Rather, the distinction between the two lies in the idea of ‘givenness’. A community forms around a *given* focus of loyalty which serves as the reason for, and catalyst of, its solidarity.¹⁰⁶ It is a product of “instinct and heredity”.¹⁰⁷ Thus, according to Maritain, the nation – not, importantly, the nation-state – is an example of a community. The nation is something “ethico-social: a human community based on the fact of birth and lineage... a community of people who become aware of themselves as history has made them...and who love themselves as they know or imagine themselves to be, with a kind of inevitable introversion.”¹⁰⁸ A national community is formed round the pre-existing dimensions of blood or history or, as he might have added, soil.

That does not make the nation homochromatic. On the contrary, Maritain sees it as “a community of communities, a self-aware network of common feelings and representations that human nature and instinct have caused to swarm around a number of physical, historical and social data.”¹⁰⁹ The nation is made up of other communities worthy of the

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name, most clearly the family, but also other regional, local, linguistic, and ethnic communities.

This view of the nation as community does not mean it is wholly independent of, or indifferent to, ideas and structures of “society”. On the contrary, it is not uncommon, Maritain reasons, for a political society to give rise “naturally...to a national community of a higher degree”, so that “the Nation here depends on the existence of the body politic” rather than the other way round. In effect, at its strongest, the State can cause the Nation to form, the obvious example of this being a “multi-national Federation of States” such as the United States (in which Maritain had now settled) which “is at the same time a multinational Nation.”¹¹⁰

If community forms around a given object of loyalty, society is formed round a chosen or attained one.¹¹¹ As with community, “social life as such brings men together by reason of a certain common object.”¹¹² That noted, in society “personal consciousness retains priority.”¹¹³ In a society the object is “a task to be done or an end to be aimed at, which depends on the determinations of human intelligence and will.”¹¹⁴ Thus, illustrates Maritain, whereas regional, ethnic, and linguistic groups, and social classes are examples of communities, the business firm, the labour union, and scientific association are examples of society.¹¹⁵

As, of course, is the state, although Maritain takes care in delineating this particular society, and especially how it relates to the wider “body politic” or “political society”. For Maritain, as noted, the body politic is a society rather than a community. However, from the outset there is a tension in this signalled by his description of political society as being both “required by nature and achieved by reason”.¹¹⁶ This positions the body politic in a liminal zone in which the cause of its existence is pre-existent (which would orient it towards being a community) whilst the form of its existence is dependent on the exercise of human choice and reason (thereby making it a society). This manifests itself in certain characteristics of the body politic, such as Maritain’s explanation that “justice is a primary condition for the existence of the body politic, but Friendship is its very life-giving form.”¹¹⁷ Such a dual characteristic does not alter the moral content or purpose of the body politic, but it does create some confusion over how that is to be achieved. Does the body politic (as opposed to the various communities and societies that subsist within it) require solidarity and fellowship (“Friendship”) in order to serve its ends, or is it grounded primarily in the

securing of justice, in which case such immediate conditions of solidarity and fellowship should be irrelevant? Put more bluntly in Maritain's preferred terms, does the body politic live on justice alone, or on justice and friendship?

As just noted, this will inform how the body politic should achieve its ends, rather than what those ends are. Here Maritain is clearer. Using terms familiar from his theological anthropology, Maritain writes that "the political task is essentially a task of civilisation and culture, of helping man to conquer his genuine freedom of expansion or autonomy".¹¹⁸

After the fashion of the New Christendom Maritain envisaged in *Integral Humanism*, that "task" is now a specifically secular one, a temporal common good that knows its limits. That temporal common good is not a neutral, objective or value-less good. "Such a body politic Christianly inspired...would have its own social and political morality, its own conception of justice and civic friendship, temporal common good and common task, human progress and civilisation, vitally rooted in Christian awareness."¹¹⁹ But it would nonetheless remain a firmly earthly good. "The final aim and most essential task of the body politic or political society... it is...to better the conditions of human life itself."¹²⁰

If this is the final goal of the body politic, Maritain is also clear that for all it might be autonomous, the body politic is plural, and that the end that is proper to it is to be achieved by recognising and supporting those communities and societies "whose essential rights and freedoms are anterior to itself."¹²¹ This is where Maritain's distinction between the body politic and the state comes in. Maritain writes in *Man and the State* that unlike the various societies and communities that populate a nation, and indeed unlike the nation itself, the State does not have a corporate personality. "The notion of moral or collective personality applies in a genuine manner to the body politic", he states in a footnote.¹²² "Both the people and the body politic are *subjects (or holders) of rights*".¹²³ By contrast, that "same notion of moral personality" does not apply to the State."

He makes a similar point, even more forcefully, regarding "sovereignty", pulling apart the familiar phrase "sovereign state" with the same force he does "nation state". Neither of the two elements inherent in the concept of sovereignty, according to Maritain – "a *natural and inalienable right* to supreme independence and supreme power" and "the *absolutely and transcendentally* supreme character of that independence and power" can "by any means" be ascribed to the State." The State "is not and has never been genuinely sovereign."¹²⁴

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Neither sovereign nor possessed of moral personality or rights, the state according to Maritain is “a merely abstract entity”.¹²⁵ “Superior” to the “other organs or collective parts” of the body politic, it is not, however, superior “to the body politic itself”.¹²⁶ This combination of inferiority and superiority is grounded in the theological anthropology outlined above: the state as superior to individuals that populate it, but inferior to, and in the service of, their emergent personalities, and the societies and communities by means of which they emerge. “The State is... at the service of the body politic as a whole”.¹²⁷

Maritain tries to spell out what this service comprises. The state, he explains, is that part of the body politic “especially concerned with the maintenance of law, the promotion of the common welfare and public order, and the administration of public affairs”.¹²⁸ It is “an impersonal lasting super-structure...bound by law and by a system of universal regulations.”¹²⁹ Its “concrete... principle function” is “to ensure the legal order and enforcement of the law”.¹³⁰ Its “final aim” is “the common good of the political society.”¹³¹

While this definition, or series of definitions, falls short of the concrete elaboration of social, political, and economic philosophy that he called for in *Integral Humanism*, it does allow Maritain to identify when the state is *failing* in its duties. Thus, he is clear on the unacceptable extremes that correspond to the philosophies of freedom outlined in *Freedom in the Modern World*, namely the state’s abnegation of its responsibility for the temporal common good on the one hand, and the its undue accretion of power and significance, verging on its sanctification, on the other.

Of the first, Maritain writes, in sentiments that Temple would echo, that from the latter years of the nineteenth century onwards, state “intervention” has been “needed to compensate for the general disregard for justice and human solidarity that prevailed” before.¹³² Accordingly, the growth of the state “as a rational or juridical machine and with regard to its inner constitutive system of law and power, its unity, its discipline”, and, in the twentieth century, “as a technical machine and with regard to its law making, supervising, and organizing functions in social and economic life” are, Maritain reasons, “part of normal progress” – not something against which we should automatically complain.¹³³

Unfortunately, however, this growth legitimated certain latent self-aggrandizing tendencies, epitomised by Hegel, whom Maritain criticises, as “the prophet and theologian of the totalitarian, divinised State,” leaving the legacy of a hyperactive state, which

wrongly “ascribe[d] to itself a peculiar common good.”¹³⁴ As a result, the aforementioned primary duty of the state, namely the enforcement of social justice, is now “inevitably performed” with “abnormal emphasis on power of the State” which finds itself having to make up “for the deficiencies of a society whose basic structures are not sufficiently up to the mark with regard to justice.”¹³⁵

In response, Maritain identifies the “most urgent endeavour” for democracies as being the development of “social justice” and the improvement of “world economic management”, without simultaneously allowing “too many functions of social life [to be] controlled by the State from above.”¹³⁶ Put another way, the task involves the reconstruction of what Maritain calls “the paternalist State”, which not only supervises the common good (which he claims is “normal”), but which actively manages and controls it.¹³⁷

Man and the State does not go into much detail as to what this might look like, but it does give an indication when Maritain writes that

“in order both to maintain and make fruitful the movement for social improvement supported by the State, and to bring the State back to its true nature, it is necessary that many functions now exercised by the State should be distributed among the various autonomous organs of a pluralistically structured body politic.”¹³⁸

It is to the details of those “many functions”, specifically those related to the provision of welfare, to which we now turn.

The State and the Temporal Common Good

Maritain outlines three key and linked constructive ideas for the state that honours a personalistic anthropology: the socialisation of the economy; the securing of a rich, devolved, and multidimensional social ecology of associational activity; and the recognition and upholding of rights as a means of safeguarding human dignity. Each of these, in its own way, speaks to Maritain’s vision for a welfare state, a subject he only rarely tackles directly.

Economic socialisation, Maritain is clear, is not the same as nationalisation. It seeks not to ignore or replace private interest, but to “purify...and to ennoble [it].”¹³⁹ It is, in effect, the structural recognition “of the ‘common use’ on which Thomas Aquinas has laid particular stress”.¹⁴⁰ It is to be effected by several means, supreme among which is the principle of co-ownership. Socialisation refers to the process of “social integration” through which “association in a single enterprise extends not only to the capital invested, but also to labor and management...All persons and various groups involved are made participants in some

form or other of co-ownership and co-management.”¹⁴¹ The objective is not – like nationalisation or communism – to remove ownership of property or goods from people, and not – like capitalism – to acquiesce to the limitation of ownership “to a small number of privileged ones”, but rather but “to give to each person the real and concrete possibility of acceding...to the advantages of the private ownership of earthly goods.”¹⁴² Such a localised, personalistic form of ‘socialisation’ recognises “the sense of the dignity of work”, which replaces “the contempt of the owning classes for the manual labourer” that is alleged to be inherent to capitalism.¹⁴³

Such “undertakings” are to be run locally, “on the spot, by private enterprises co-ordinated with one another and by the various communities of the very people concerned.”

Maritain’s is a vision of what he calls “progressive decentralisation” or “destatisation”, in which the state’s role is not to “plan” or “manage” this activity but to offer it “support”.¹⁴⁴ This phrase is left undefined in *Man and the State*, although Maritain gives some indication of what it might entail in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, when he talks of “the right to a just wage”, the system of “joint ownership and of joint management [that] will replace the wage system”, and the “freedom to organise”.¹⁴⁵ In other words, the role of the state in securing the socialised economy that Maritain sees as properly honouring the theocentric personalistic humanism that underpins his politics is in securing the legal infrastructure – framed largely in terms of rights – “from which a new economic organisation will emerge”.

The second key idea – that of securing a rich, devolved, and multidimensional ecology of associational activity – is, in some regards, an extension of Maritain’s socialised economy into wider social spheres. The former, in the words of *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, is a vision of “an ‘associative’ ownership of the means of production”; the latter a “pluralist pattern of social life”, characterised by “the free initiative of and mutual tension between the particular groups, working communities, co-operative agencies, unions, associations, federated bodies of producers and consumers, rising in tiers and institutionally recognised.”¹⁴⁶

This vision, for which, like Temple, he refers both to Harold Laski and R.M. MacIver, is one in which society is marked by extensive, localised, group activity, what he calls in *Integral Humanism* an “organic heterogeneity in the very structure of civil society”.¹⁴⁷ These bodies would exist of their own right, “independent of the State and subject only to the general dispositions concerning the right of free association.”¹⁴⁸ They would, accordingly, have the

“greatest autonomy possible.”¹⁴⁹ In the “economic sphere” at least, each group “would exist as a moral person... endowed with as much autonomy as the organisation of the social whole will allow.”¹⁵⁰

Here Maritain is elaborating on the principle of subsidiarity, to which he refers, via *Quadragesimo Anno*, in *Integral Humanism*.¹⁵¹ According to *Man and the State*, “everything in the body politic which can be brought about by particular organs or societies inferior in degree to the State and born out of the free initiative of the people should be brought about by those particular organs or societies.”¹⁵² The state’s role thereby becomes one of “arbitrage”¹⁵³ or “regulation”¹⁵⁴, controlled by the nation and ordered to realisation of the common good, in which such groups “play a *consultative* role”.¹⁵⁵

As the above quotation from *Integral Humanism* indicates, Maritain envisages this pluralism to be natural, “organic”, with “its own spontaneous life”.¹⁵⁶ This vision, however, is vulnerable to the potential challenge of ‘deep diversity’. What, if anything, provides the centripetal force that counterbalances the centrifugal effect of pluralism, thereby sustaining the “organic heterogeneity” of associational democracy?

Integral Humanism proposes, at considerable length, an answer to this in Maritain’s vision of a New Christendom, whose unity is no longer that of “the same faith and the same dogmas.”¹⁵⁷ In contrast to the religious unity of the Middle Ages, the party-based unity of Italy or Germany, or the proletariat-based unity of Russia, the unity of a personalist democracy is a unity “of orientation, which proceeds from a common aspiration” and is “based on a general sense of direction, a common orientation”, “a simple unity of friendship”.¹⁵⁸ It is “a *minimal* unity” although one that, Maritain remarks in a footnote without any real evidence or reason, “is much superior to that of the liberal-individualist city, which is null to tell the truth... and exists only as mechanical unity assured by the dominance of the State.”¹⁵⁹

That claimed, he nonetheless seems unsure about it, as implied by his subsequent admission that “the simply unity of friendship...does not suffice to give a form to this social body.”¹⁶⁰ Maritain’s vision of rich associational pluralism is predicated on some sense of social homogeneity or unity. “A genuine democracy implies a fundamental agreement between minds and wills on the bases of common life... it must bear within itself a *common human creed*, the creed of freedom.”¹⁶¹ However, his proposed “unity of friendship”, or as he

puts it in *Freedom and the Modern World* “unity of Becoming or of orientation” is itself, it appears, dependent on deeper foundations that it cannot itself sustain.¹⁶²

This unity apparently “springs from a common aspiration” and “gathers elements of heterogeneous culture...into a form of civilisation which is fully consonant with the eternal interests of human personality and with man’s freedom of autonomy.”¹⁶³ That, however, sounds like a rather substantial set of assumptions – “common aspiration... eternal interests of human personality... freedom of autonomy” – which are seemingly rooted in a Christian worldview that Maritain assumes will somehow underpin the new minimal unity. Unlike Temple, whose commitment to the established church always provided a significant concrete centripetal force to counterbalance the potential centrifugalism of pluralism, Maritain struggled to identify a unity that would sustain his pluralist democracy. His idea of a rich, devolved, and multidimensional ecology of associational activity as the vehicle for the provision of welfare is therefore essential to his visions but also vulnerable to the accusation that it presupposes the ethical solidarity that will cohere and sustain it.

The third key idea – the recognition and upholding of rights as a means of safeguarding human dignity – is one that appears least complicated in Maritain’s writing. Maritain’s wholesale favouring of rights, from a natural law basis, will seem contentious. Samuel Moyn, charting the development of human rights in the 1930s and ‘40s, wrote that “nearly all histories of the political language concur that the rise of rights in political theory occurred after and because of the destruction of the Thomistic natural law tradition.”¹⁶⁴ Maritain, however, had no hesitation in making the link between natural law and human rights, as Moyn acknowledges.¹⁶⁵

The simple reason, articulated at greatest length in *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law* is that “the human person possesses rights because of the very fact that he is a person.”¹⁶⁶ Talk of human dignity “means nothing” if it does not signify that by virtue of natural law, “the human person has the right to be respected, is the subject of rights”.¹⁶⁷ The move from having the right to be respected to having rights is smooth for Maritain, as is the move from having rights to having the specific, concrete rights judged necessary for him to “fulfil his destiny” that Maritain enumerates at considerable length in the book. These are firmly distinguished from the notion of rights articulated by Kant and Rousseau,¹⁶⁸ grounded in natural law, “rooted in the vocation of the person”, and correlated, at least

notionally, to the “notion of moral obligation”.¹⁶⁹ They are also extensive, Maritain’s “résumé” of them taking up three pages at the end of *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law*.

Here, Maritain divides them into three categories – the rights “of the human person as such”, the rights of the “civic person”, and the rights of the “social person” – the first group encompassing existence, liberty, family life, property, and the like; the second participation in political life, equal suffrage, equal rights, etc.; and the third the right to choose work, form trade unions, earn a just wage, and “to relief, unemployment insurance, sick benefits and social security.”

Maritain acknowledges that rights do not in themselves make real his vision of personalist democracy. “The advocates of a liberal-individualistic, a communistic, or a personalist type of society will lay down on paper similar, perhaps identical, lists of the rights of man.”¹⁷⁰

What makes a difference is the particular ordering of those rights.¹⁷¹ Advocates of a “liberal-individualistic type of society” will see the mark of human dignity first and foremost “in the power of each person to appropriate individually the goods of nature in order to do freely whatever he wants.” Those of a “communistic type of society” will see it in “the power to submit these same goods to the collective command of the social body in order to ‘free’ human labour (by subduing it to the economic community).” Personalists, by contrast, will see it “in the power to make these same goods of nature serve the common conquest of intrinsically human, moral, and spiritual goods and of man’s freedom of autonomy.”¹⁷² So it is that Maritain sees the development of human personality as being best secured by the recognition and protection of human, civic and social rights, the state having a regulatory function in the socialised economy and civil society, but also being responsible for the protection of these rights, and in particular a personalist ‘ordering’ of them – although precisely what that might look like is left undefined.

Conclusion

Our reading of Maritain enables us to build on the picture of the connection between theological anthropology and the welfare state that we began in the work of William Temple. In many ways, there is important complementarity between the two.

Both trace, and emphasise the significance of, the link between theologically-informed anthropology and a theory of the (welfare) state, underlining how a proper approach to the latter demands serious engagement with the former. Both draw out a multi-dimensional conception of that personhood, although this is at least in part because Maritain’s thought

influenced Temple's from the 1930s, shaping and supplementing his longstanding ideas about personality and fellowship. Both have a somewhat equivocal understanding of the depth of the wound of sin for human character and behaviour. Both articulate theological anthropologies that understand the person as aspiring to freedom and autonomy (properly understood); both discern him/her as created for and only satisfied by relationship with others; and both see him/her as fulfilled ultimately in the act of self-giving. Both set out a consequent conception of the (welfare) state in which a rich ecology of associational activity is the primary vehicle for the delivery of welfare. Both advocate the 'socialisation' (to use Maritain's word) of the economy and the potential for partnership and co-operative ventures for both economic and welfare activities. And both envision the state as performing the role of broker or co-ordinator for this associational activity.

All that noted, Maritain's thinking augments and refines Temple's in some important ways. Maritain has a more developmental anthropology than Temple, more alert to the ways in which personhood grows (or is retarded) by communication and relationship. He has a more (or at least more consistent) understanding of the human as *homo faber*, and therefore a more fully formed conception of the dignity and significance of work as a factor within 'welfare' that honours personhood. And Maritain also has a clearer, if not unproblematic, idea of the separation of the different political structures involved in the formation of personality: community, nation, society, body politic, and state. In this respect, beyond any other, Maritain stands separate from Temple, whose theology and context oriented him to a closer identification of nation, society, body politic, and state, albeit one that fluctuated in his adult life according to circumstances such as war, coronation and Prayer Book Crisis. Maritain, inhabiting the political words of secular France and US, and the intellectual world of Thomism, could not fall back on such a close church-state-nation nexus. Conversely, however, that nexus did at least supply Temple with an underlying political ethic which Maritain's discussion of the ethical basis of a personalist democracy lacks.

Although Maritain never attains the political precision of Temple's *Christianity and Social Order*, he does locate his vision of a personalistic, associational welfare along the geo-political spectrum of the time, between liberal and totalitarian ideologies, while also being somewhat more precise about what such a welfare state entails (albeit explored through the lens of rights):

“the right freely to choose his work... to form vocational groups or trade unions... of the worker to be considered socially as an adult... of economic groups...and other social groups to freedom and autonomy... to a just wage... the right to work... the right to the joint ownership and joint management of the enterprise and to the ‘worker’s title’... the right to relief, unemployment insurance, sick benefits and social security.”¹⁷³

Superficially, as with Temple, this might read as an unqualified approval for ‘the’ post-war welfare state, albeit with the qualification set out in the introductory chapter that there is no such thing as *the* welfare state. Maritain was certainly clear about the need for what we might call, without undue anachronism, universal social security. It is this that lies behind his quoting John Courtney Murray in the footnotes in *Man and the State* (without comment but, we can safely assume, without disagreement): “the modern ‘welfare-state’, simply by serving human welfare, would serve the Church better than Justinian or Charlemagne ever did.”¹⁷⁴ His articulation of the rights due to the person, at the end of *The Rights of Man and the Natural Law* lends itself to a similar reading.

However, this would be to downplay the agential, relational, and self-giving aspects of his personalistic anthropology and also to pay insufficient attention to his repeated clarity about how the human’s primary needs were material *and* spiritual. Persons were moral agents, made for the free exercise of their autonomy, ordered to sociality and communication, with one another and with God, and fulfilled in their capacity for self-giving. No welfare state that treated them primarily as recipients or objects of material security fully honoured that personhood, just as no state that failed to respect the freedom of the church and of other non-state associations to serve this personalistic temporal common good could be acceptable.

¹ Lambeth Palace Library records, MS. 4515, 100

² Hughes (2010)

³ Chappel (2018), esp. chapters 3 and 4

⁴ Doering (1985), pp. 64-72.

⁵ Maritain (1928), p.22

⁶ Maritain (1951), p. 13.

⁷ Maritain (1936), p. 221. See also Maritain (1951), p. 10; Maritain (1940), p. 66; Maritain (1944), p. 77.

⁸ Maritain (1928), p. 84.

⁹ Maritain (1928), p. 47.

¹⁰ Maritain (1928), pp. 54, 56.

¹¹ Maritain (1928), p. 99.

¹² Maritain (1940), p. 2.

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¹³ In his letter to Temple in 1943 he corrected the Archbishop to the effect that “I am not a Jesuit father [but] a lay philosopher” and “my philosophical positions are those of the Thomistic school, not of the school of Suarez or Molina.” (Lambeth Palace Library records, MS. 4515, 100).

¹⁴ Maritain (1928), p. 20.

¹⁵ Maritain (1940), p. 48.

¹⁶ There is an obvious parallel here with Temple’s scheme in *The Nature of Personality*, though Maritain does not reference Temple and there is no evidence he read this work.

¹⁷ Maritain (1940), p. p. 47; Maritain (1947), p. 33.

¹⁸ Maritain (1947), p. 59.

¹⁹ Maritain (1940), p. 52.

²⁰ Maritain (1943), p. 65.

²¹ Maritain (1947), p. 52. See also Maritain (1947), p. 43.

²² Maritain (1940), p. 52.

²³ See Maritain (1947), pp. 35-36. On Maritain’s debt to Aquinas on the questions of individuality, and in its relationship with personality, see Dougherty (2003), pp 44-59.

²⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 62.

²⁵ Maritain (1947), p. 20.

²⁶ Maritain (1928), pp. 24-25; emphases added.

²⁷ Maritain (1947), p. 58; emphases added.

²⁸ Maritain (1946), p. 32.

²⁹ Maritain (1947), p. 15.

³⁰ Maritain (1947), p. 85.

³¹ Maritain (1935), p. 28. See also Maritain (1940), p. 107.

³² Maritain (1940), p. 52. See also Maritain (1947), p. 43.

³³ Maritain (1936), p. 169.

³⁴ Maritain (1928), p. 20.

³⁵ Maritain (1936), p. 265.

³⁶ Maritain (1940), p. 66.

³⁷ See Maritain (1940), p. 51; Maritain (1943), p. 40; Maritain (1946), p. 32

³⁸ Maritain (1935), pp. 19-20.

³⁹ Maritain (1935), p. 20.

⁴⁰ Maritain (1936), p. 265.

⁴¹ Notes his comments in Maritain (1943), p. 67: “the worth of the person, his liberty, his rights arise from the order of naturally sacred things which bear upon them the imprint of the Father of Being and which have in him the goal of their movement.”

⁴² Maritain (1935), pp. 21-22.

⁴³ Maritain (1943), p. 67.

⁴⁴ Maritain (1940), p. 66.

⁴⁵ Maritain (1940), p. 51.

⁴⁶ Maritain (1943), p. 68; emphases added.

⁴⁷ Maritain (1940), p. 51.

⁴⁸ Maritain (1947), p. 47.

⁴⁹ Emphases added.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Maritain (1947), pp. 41, 57; Maritain (1940), p. 51.

⁵¹ Maritain (1940), p. 50.

⁵² Maritain (1943), pp. 66-68.

⁵³ Maritain (1940), p. 58.

⁵⁴ Maritain (1940), p. 138.

⁵⁵ Maritain enters an important caveat in a footnote here to the effect that he is speaking not of free will, which is “an essential property of the human being”, but “of liberty in the sense of absence of restraint”.

⁵⁶ Maritain (1928), pp. 161-62.

⁵⁷ Maritain (1935), p. 27.

⁵⁸ Maritain (1936), p. 187.

⁵⁹ Maritain (1940), p. 106.

⁶⁰ Maritain (1940), p. 70. See also Maritain (1928), pp. 161-62.

⁶¹ Temple (1958), p. 233. Temple had been reading Maritain in the year or two before this essay but it is not clear whether this criticism was levelled at him or not.

⁶² Temple, ‘Thomism and Modern Needs’, p. 233.

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⁶³ Maritain (1936), pp. 162, 196, 217.

⁶⁴ Maritain (1946), p. 48.

⁶⁵ Maritain (1928), p. 124.

⁶⁶ Maritain (1940), p. 131.

⁶⁷ Maritain (1935), p. 46.

⁶⁸ Maritain (1936), p. 217.

⁶⁹ Maritain (1940), p. 97.

⁷⁰ Maritain (1947), p. 43.

⁷¹ Maritain (1943), p. 100.

⁷² Maritain (1936), p. 281.

⁷³ Maritain (1946), p. 37.

⁷⁴ Maritain (1935), pp. 23-25

⁷⁵ Maritain (1946), p. 24

⁷⁶ “In the long run the dream of such a culture would seem to be the production of a Leviathan dominating the whole earth, to the freedom of which a multitude of happy slaves will gladly sacrifice their souls” (*Freedom in the Modern World*, p. 25)

⁷⁷ Self-evidently, Maritain has Marxism in his sights at this point, cf. his remarks in Maritain (1936), p. 269, but see also comments on socialism in Maritain (1936), p. 208.

⁷⁸ Maritain (1936), p. 25.

⁷⁹ Cf. Maritain (1928), p. 21.

⁸⁰ Maritain (1940), p. 58 (emphases original).

⁸¹ See also Maritain (1946), p. 66 and Maritain (1936), p. 158.

⁸² Maritain (1940), p. 58; emphases original.

⁸³ See, for example, Maritain (1947), p. 91, 97; Maritain (1946), p. 45; Maritain (1940), p. 63; Maritain (1943), p. 90.

⁸⁴ Maritain (1947), p. 91; Maritain (1943), p. 91; Maritain (1943), p. 90; Maritain (1946), p. 45; Maritain (1940), p. 63; Maritain (1946), p. 45; Maritain (1947), p. 91.

⁸⁵ Maritain (1936), p. 224.

⁸⁶ Maritain (1936), p. 224.

⁸⁷ Maritain (1936), p. 224.

⁸⁸ Maritain (1946), p. 22.

⁸⁹ Maritain (1940), p. 17; Maritain (1943), p. 130.

⁹⁰ Maritain (1936), p. 256.

⁹¹ Maritain (1946), p. 20; Maritain (1943), p. 127

⁹² Maritain (1943), p. 127-29

⁹³ Maritain (1944), p. 20.

⁹⁴ Maritain (1940), p. 170.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Maritain (1947), pp. 50-51 and Maritain (1943), p. 69

⁹⁶ Maritain (1936), p. 221.

⁹⁷ Maritain (1946), p. 149.

⁹⁸ Maritain (1946), p. 31; Maritain (1936), p. 212.

⁹⁹ Maritain (1943), p. 94; Maritain (1946), p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Maritain (1946), p. 59.

¹⁰¹ Maritain (1947), p. 52. See also Maritain (1951), p. *Man and the State*, pp. 11-12, where he offers a similarly comprehensive list.

¹⁰² Maritain (1940), p. 167.

¹⁰³ Maritain (1936), p. 227.

¹⁰⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Maritain (1951), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Maritain (1951), p. 3

¹⁰⁷ Maritain (1951), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Maritain (1951), p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Maritain (1951), p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Maritain (1951), p. 8.

¹¹¹ This division maps onto that of ascribed and attained identities discussion in Goodhart (2017)

¹¹² Maritain (1951), p. 3.

¹¹³ Maritain (1951), p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Maritain (1951), p. 3.

3: Jacques Maritain

- ¹¹⁶ Maritain (1951), p. 10.
- ¹¹⁷ Maritain (1951), p. 10.
- ¹¹⁸ Maritain (1951), p. 55
- ¹¹⁹ Maritain (1951), p. 167.
- ¹²⁰ Maritain (1951), p. 54.
- ¹²¹ Maritain (1951), pp. 40-41.
- ¹²² Maritain (1951), p. 16[fn].
- ¹²³ Emphases original.
- ¹²⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 43; emphases original.
- ¹²⁵ Maritain (1951), p. 16[fn].
- ¹²⁶ Maritain (1951), p. 13.
- ¹²⁷ “Man is by no means for the State. The State is for man.” Maritain (1951), p. 13
- ¹²⁸ Maritain (1951), p. 12
- ¹²⁹ Maritain (1951), p. 12
- ¹³⁰ Maritain (1951), p. 17
- ¹³¹ Maritain (1951), p. 24.
- ¹³² Maritain (1951), p. 19.
- ¹³³ Maritain (1951), p. 19
- ¹³⁴ Maritain (1951), pp. 13-14. Emphases added.
- ¹³⁵ Maritain (1951), p. 20.
- ¹³⁶ Maritain (1951), p. 18.
- ¹³⁷ Maritain (1951), p. 20. See Chappel (2018), chapters 3 and 4.
- ¹³⁸ Maritain (1951), p. 27
- ¹³⁹ Maritain (1936), p. 270.
- ¹⁴⁰ Maritain (1951), p. 22.
- ¹⁴¹ Maritain (1951), p. 21.
- ¹⁴² Maritain (1936), p. 269.
- ¹⁴³ Maritain (1936), p. 271; Maritain (1940), p. 85.
- ¹⁴⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 22.
- ¹⁴⁵ Maritain (1943), p. pp. 125-26
- ¹⁴⁶ Maritain (1943), p. 128; emphases original; Maritain (1951), p. 23.
- ¹⁴⁷ Maritain (1951), p. 29; Maritain (1936), p. 256.
- ¹⁴⁸ Maritain (1936), p. 261.
- ¹⁴⁹ Maritain (1936), p. 256.
- ¹⁵⁰ Maritain (1935), p. 32.
- ¹⁵¹ Maritain (1936), p. 256.
- ¹⁵² Maritain (1951), p. 67.
- ¹⁵³ Maritain (1940), p. 87.
- ¹⁵⁴ Maritain (1946), p. 42-43
- ¹⁵⁵ Maritain (1943), p. 131; emphases original
- ¹⁵⁶ Maritain (1935), p. 32.
- ¹⁵⁷ Maritain (1936), p. 259
- ¹⁵⁸ Maritain (1936), pp. 259-62
- ¹⁵⁹ Maritain (1936), p. 261.
- ¹⁶⁰ Maritain (1936), p. 262.
- ¹⁶¹ Maritain (1951), p. 109; emphases added.
- ¹⁶² Maritain (1935), p. 40.
- ¹⁶³ Maritain (1935), p. 40.
- ¹⁶⁴ Moyn (2015), p. 83.
- ¹⁶⁵ Moyn (2015), p. 83.
- ¹⁶⁶ Maritain (1943), p. 106.
- ¹⁶⁷ Maritain (1943), p. 106.
- ¹⁶⁸ Maritain (1943), p. 108.
- ¹⁶⁹ Maritain (1943), pp. 116, 107.
- ¹⁷⁰ Maritain (1951), p. 106
- ¹⁷¹ Maritain (1951), p. 106.
- ¹⁷² Maritain (1951), p. 107.
- ¹⁷³ Maritain (1943), p. 138.

¹⁷⁴ Maritain (1951), p. 172, fn 26.

4: “The meaning of that body [is] the reciprocal self-gift of persons”: John Paul II

Introduction

“I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart”, then Cardinal Karol Wojtyła wrote to his friend Henri de Lubac in February 1968. This, he said, was “the metaphysical sense and mystery of the person”. The “evil of our times”, he went on to explain, “consists in... a kind of degradation, indeed a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person.” It is an evil of the “metaphysical” rather than just the moral order, which required not “sterile polemics” but “a kind of recapitulation of the inviolable mystery of the person.”¹

Borne of his experiences under Soviet influence in post-war Poland, this focus on the mystery and dignity of the human person was central to Wojtyła’s intellectual and personal concerns throughout his life. “The two totalitarian systems which tragically marked our century...I came to know...from within,” he wrote in an essay marking the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination, “so it is easy to understand my deep concern for the dignity of every human person.”²

According to Richard Spinello, from the time he was a young priest in Krakow, Wojtyła’s was “disturbed by questionable trajectories in anthropology.”³ “When I discovered my priestly vocation,” he wrote in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, “man became the central theme of my pastoral work”.⁴ This matured through the years of the Second Vatican Council and beyond. According to Jarosław Kupczak, Wojtyła made “extensive contributions” to the drafting of *Gaudium et spes* in 1965, and he quoted the document frequently in his later encyclicals,⁵ placing particular emphasis on its insistence that “man is the source, the center, and the purpose of all economic and social life”.⁶ He later praised the “Christological character” of the “anthropological revolution” that Vatican II brought about, going on to state that “the anthropology that lies at the heart of the entire Conciliar Magisterium”⁷

The year after he wrote to de Lubac, he published, *Osoba i czyn*, translated a decade later into English under the title *The Acting Person: A Contribution to Phenomenological Anthropology*. He pledged in his inaugural mass as Pope “to serve Christ and with Christ’s power to serve

the human person and the whole of mankind”.⁸ His first papal encyclical, *Redemptor hominis* was devoted exclusively to theme of Christian anthropology. He saw the “correct view of the human person and of his unique value” as the guiding principles of Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* and, thereafter, “of all of the Church’s social doctrine”.⁹ There is, in short, a clear continuity of focus in John Paul II’s thinking, not only a focus of topic – “the metaphysical sense and mystery of the person” as he told de Lubac – but also of message, with, as we shall see, ideas of human createdness, transcendence, rationality, agency, relationship, and gift are visible throughout his pre-papal and papal writings.

That said, there are two caveats that merit attention and help explain the specific focus of this chapter. The first is that while there was indeed continuity in the anthropological focus of Karol Wojtyła/ John Paul II’s thought, there was less continuity – or at least more variety – in the source and foundation of that thought.

Wojtyła’s intellectual genesis has been much written about.¹⁰ His first doctoral thesis was on St John of the Cross and his statement there that “the human person comes to know God as a Divine Person a ‘subject’ in a reciprocal relationship of mutual self-giving” is recognisable in his later, papal writings.¹¹ That said, although John Paul II never repudiated the influence of St John of the Cross, Aquinas, or the phenomenologist, Max Scheler, on whom he wrote his ‘habilitation’ thesis, the early foundations of his personalism did shift, after Vatican II and, in particular, when he becomes pope, and adopted a much more scriptural and more Christocentric focus than his early writings.

In his pre-Vatican II writings, Wojtyła operates in a similar register to Jacques Maritain, although he references Maritain only infrequently and, at least according to Michael Novak, cannot really be understood “within Maritain’s framework.”¹² Afterwards, or at least by the time he becomes pope, Wojtyła is more biblical in focus, his Wednesday Catechesis on the theology of the body for example, being grounded in a forensic study of the scriptures in general, and Genesis 1-3, Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians in particular.

A similar point may be made of the renewed Christocentric foundation of his anthropology. His encyclicals repeatedly emphasise that “man and man’s lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love”,¹³ and he repeatedly quotes the phrase from *Gaudium et spes*, that he judged to be foundational, that “only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.”¹⁴

This consequence of all this is a rich and complex foundation for his anthropology, comprising the spirituality of St John of the Cross, “a realist metaphysic of the person enriched by phenomenology”, and – the emphasis of his papal period – the revelation of God in scripture, especially the opening chapters of Genesis and the gospels, whence his Christocentric personalism arises.¹⁵ This chapter will engage primarily with the last of these partly because although the dignity and mystery of the person was central to John Paul II’s thought from the 1940s, its social, political and economic implications are only spelled out in any detail within his papal writings; and partly because John Paul’s more scripturally-grounded conceptualisation of the person distinguishes him from Temple and Maritain and thus add a new and important dimension for this thesis.

Karol Wojtyła was not, of course, deaf or indifferent to the wider implications of the metaphysical anthropology in his earlier writings. Indeed, ministering in post-war Poland as he did, he could not but have understood the political ramifications of his theological and philosophical anthropology. As the wider context of letter to de Lubac with which this chapter opened intimates, it was political circumstances that concentrated his long-standing focus on the dignity and mystery of the human. However, for all that his deep aversion to the overbearing and omnipresent state has its roots in his pre-papal years, during those years the wider implications of his anthropology tended to be limited to spiritual, emotional, sexual, and marital issues. It was only in his papal encyclicals, and other contemporary writings, that he drew explicit connection between theological anthropology and political thought and practice, with particular reference to the welfare state, or as the English translation of *Centesimus Annus* calls it, the Social Assistance State.

When he does do this, he does it forcefully. He claims in *Centesimus annus* that “the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature.”¹⁶ In *Memory and Identity*, he locates the cardinal error of utilitarianism, over which certain understandings of free-market capitalism have been erected, in its anthropology, in particular its unwarranted conviction “that man tends essentially towards his own interest or that of the group to which he belongs.”¹⁷ In *Evangelium vitae*, he writes that it is upon the recognition of “the sacred value of human life” that “every human community and the political community itself” is (or should be) founded.¹⁸ In an address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 1997 he repeated a claim he made in *Centesimus annus*, to the effect that “democracy is only possible ‘on the basis of a correct conception of the human person’”¹⁹ He believed that at the root of environmental degradation lay “an anthropological error”.²⁰ In short, what

we have in John Paul II's papal writings, is a body of work which, while drawing on a foundations of Thomism, phenomenology and Juanist spirituality, focuses primarily on a Christocentric reading of scripture and offers a sustained exploration of the seminal link between theological anthropology and political thought.

Theological Anthropology

John Paul II's papal corpus is significant. This, in combination with his sustained interest in the dignity and mystery of the person, makes for extensive source material and warns against making hubristic statements about a definitive picture of his theological anthropology. This chapter draws on a limited number of key texts (papal encyclicals, relevant addresses to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and several other significant works published during his papacy) and draws out three paired themes – createdness and transcendence, rationality and agency, relationality and gift – from those writings. This list could be greater. For example, I mention only briefly, in the context of agency, his discussion in *Redemptor hominis* of humanity's "sharing in Christ's kingly mission" and this conception of royal domination could conceivably be expanded. Alternatively, it could be shorter, as there is subtle overlap between a number of these categories, which will be highlighted below. The six I have chosen, however, offer a sufficiently broad, accurate and critical picture of John Paul II's rich understanding of personhood, and while the pairing is an analytical device, rather than being self-evident in the source material itself, it enables me to draw out the more significant themes within his theological anthropology (in particular those that correspond with Temple, Maritain, and (as we shall see) Williams' theological anthropologies) and develop the key materials from which a coherent, constructive Christian theology of the welfare state can be developed in the concluding chapter.

Persons as created

The human person, in John Paul II's anthropology, is a created, corporeal being. This is not the most significant aspect of his anthropology, at least judged by emphasis, but it is worth mentioning first as without it, John Paul's powerful emphasis on the transcendent nature of the person is in danger of giving legitimacy to the kind of 'self-creation' and moral relativism that is wholly alien to his thinking. The person's capacity for transcendence requires an emphasis on his created, dependent corporeal nature in order to prevent it

from drifting off into subjectivism, just as its created nature needs an emphasis on transcendence in order to prevent it sliding into pure materialism.

The person has “a bodily and a spiritual nature”, the pope writes in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, a nature that is “symbolized in the second creation account by the two elements: the earth, from which God forms man’s body, and the breath of life which he breathes into man’s nostrils.”²¹ This dual nature should not be read as ‘dualist’. The human person is not made of two different things – flesh and spirit – but is rather a unity that must be understood in both physical and spiritual terms. Spinello describes this vision as one of “nondualistic wholeness”,²² alternatively, in the term preferred and detailed by Denis Alexander, we might describe it as one of a dual-aspect monism.²³

As a created being, man is “therefore in complete ontological and ethical dependence upon the Creator”, he writes in *Dives in misericordia*.²⁴ There is an unhealthy way of understanding human dependence, most visible in the “dialectical materialism” at which the pope takes aim in *Laborem exercens*.²⁵ There, man is no longer the subject (of work) but is understood and treated as dependent on that which is material, thereby undermining his agency and freedom. In contrast, God being wholly other to the created order means that mankind’s complete dependence on him is not only compatible with his dignity, but a foundation of it.

Createdness also means temporality. “Time has a fundamental importance” in Christianity, he wrote in his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*.²⁶ God’s truth and salvation unfold in time, and, as he says in *Evangelium vitae*, man’s “life in time... is the fundamental condition, the initial stage and an integral part of the entire unified process of human existence.”²⁷ Again, as with dependency, this is something that is apt to be misunderstood as limiting rather than enabling the person’s transcendence. But temporality should not be understood in opposition to eternity. The pope insists, quoting *Gaudium et spes* in his book *Memory and Identity*, that “man’s horizons are not limited only to the temporal order”, and that “while living in the context of human history, he preserves intact his eternal vocation.”²⁸

Contrary to some contemporary ideologies against which John Paul writes, it is human createdness that provides the basis for personal freedom and relational integrity. Some “moralists”, he writes in *Veritatis splendor*, conceive of freedom as “somehow in opposition to or in conflict with material and biological nature, over which it must progressively assert itself.”²⁹

Similarly, relationship with others is grounded in mutual corporeality, the body being the site and foundation for the encounters through which personality is developed. The body should be “perceived as a properly personal reality, a sign and place of relations with others,” rather than others being seen as an impediment to true meeting of minds, or “reduced to pure materiality... a complex of organs, functions and energies to be used according to the sole criteria of pleasure and efficiency.”³⁰

Understanding this prevents the person from sliding towards an illicit subjectivism or autonomy, through which “only the person who enjoys full or at least incipient autonomy and who emerges from a state of total dependence on others” is judged a true subject of rights or through which the other is considered “an enemy from whom one has to defend oneself” thereby losing any reference to common values or a universally binding truth.”³¹ In this way, John Paul draws a link from an erroneous conception of the human *person*, which downplays our created nature, through misconceptions of the human *good*, as being unduly subjective or autonomous, to those political systems (in this case liberal or libertarian) that ultimately fail and dehumanise the persons they should be fostering.

Persons as transcendent

Karol Wojtyła made transcendence one of the three characteristics of the human person in *The Acting Person*.³² The theme remains a major one in his papacy for the foundational reason, as he expresses it in *Dominum et vivificantem*, his encyclical on the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, that man is made in the image of “the Triune God, who ‘exists’ in himself as a transcendent reality of interpersonal gift” – a formulation that encapsulates not only the theme of transcendence but also those relationality and gift, discussed later, illustrating the interpenetration of these qualities.³³

As noted, it is helpful to understand the human capacity for transcendence as ‘paired’ with the pope’s emphasis on human createdness, as without it human corporeality degenerates into being mere materiality, the human becoming an object like any other in creation. Humans bear the image of God and are thereby created for more than is available in their material context. To deny God is to deny man his “true greatness”, namely “his transcendence in respect to earthly realities”, the crime of which atheism and Enlightenment rationalism are guilty.³⁴ Human transcendence is cognitive and relational; man can know the eternal, can know God, and is capable of participating in him, albeit imperfectly, on earth.

As we shall note in the section on rationality, John Paul has a high view of human reason, the ability of which to grasp metaphysical truth is a mark of human dignity. “Metaphysics should not be seen as an alternative to anthropology”, he insists in *Fides et ratio*. The “factual and the empirical” do not exhaust the human understanding of reality. Whether in the form of truth, beauty, moral values, other persons, in being itself, or in God, the human person senses the call of “the absolute and transcendent” which opens up “the metaphysical dimension of reality” before him. Our capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension “is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical”, as is human language’s capacity to express “divine and transcendent reality in a universal way”, again albeit “analogically”.³⁵

The person is not simply capable of knowing the transcendent truth, however but also “a privileged locus for the *encounter* with being.”³⁶ Knowledge does not destroy mystery but in fact reveals it more clearly, showing how man’s supreme calling is “to share in the divine mystery of the life of the Trinity”, he says, quoting Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum*.³⁷ The fullness of life to which man is called “exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God”, he writes in *Evangelium vitae*.³⁸ Or, expressed more prosaically and functionally, as he puts it in *Laborem exercens*, God’s “salvific plan” is for people “to deepen their friendship with Christ” and, by means of work, to “participates in the activity of God himself”.³⁹

Persons as rational

John Paul II had a high view of human rationality, the foundation of which he saw as being a “desire for truth” that is intrinsic to human nature. The human has a “ceaselessly self-transcendent orientation towards the truth”, he writes in *Fides et ratio*, his major encyclical on the subject.⁴⁰ Indeed, he goes as far as to say that “one may define the human being, therefore, as *the one who seeks the truth*.”⁴¹ Absent the truth, humans lose the lodestar of their personhood, their “state as person” ending up “being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data”.⁴²

The pursuit of truth is enabled through human reason. “In this their nobility consists”.⁴³ The pope is clear that human reason is “not restricted to sensory knowledge.”⁴⁴ Rather, it has a “transcendent capacity”, again referencing *Gaudium et spes* and its assertion that man is right to judge that in “his intellect he surpasses the material universe,” on account of sharing “in the light of the divine mind”.⁴⁵ Romans 1 is, of course, a key text here, and John

Paul states that “this important Pauline text affirms the human capacity for metaphysical enquiry”.⁴⁶

For all John Paul’s belief that the human orientation towards truth and capacity for transcendent reason is a source of personhood and dignity, he also recognises limitations. None of these is in any way fatal and none seriously qualifies the pope’s high view of reason as part of human nature, but they are worth noting if we are to avoid reconstructing his anthropology in a way that makes it unduly rationalistic.

First, John Paul never imagines that human reason’s capacity to grasp transcendent truth is sufficient or an alternative to revelation. Thus, for all that reason *can* discern the existence of God or an objective moral order, revelation “proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided.” John Paul does not think they are *a priori* “inaccessible to reason” – what revelation reveals is not in itself unreasonable – but in practice human reason is inadequate to the task and needs the assistance of revelation. Thus the notion of “a free and personal God”, the reality of sin, the notion of the person “as a spiritual being”, and his inherent “dignity, equality and freedom” are all revealed truths, intelligible to reason if not obvious to it.⁴⁷

Second, in section 48 of *Veritatis splendor*, on the place of the human body in questions of natural law, the pope stresses that “reason and free will are linked with all the bodily and sense faculties,” and argues against the idea that the body is “extrinsic” to the person.⁴⁸ In other words, despite reason’s capacity to transcend the material and access truth in excess of that which the material world provides, John Paul still identifies a link between the created person and his exercise of reason.

Finally, while drawing on Romans 1 as evidence of reason’s capacity for transcendence, he explicitly acknowledges the Apostle’s teaching that “their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Through this original sin of pride, which deceived us into thinking ourselves “sovereign and autonomous”, reason was “wounded” and became “more and more a prisoner to itself.”⁴⁹ The pope is quick to say that the incarnation “redeemed reason from its weakness, setting it free from the shackles in which it had imprisoned itself”, but the extent to which human reason is restored here and now is as unclear, as is the parallel question of human moral agency.

Thus, human rationality is a key element within John Paul II’s anthropology and he has a high view of what human reason is capable. However, he is also alert to its dependent,

created and wounded nature and, for all he sees the human orientation to truth as a source of human dignity, this remains distinct from the modernist championing of human reason as the unique, distinct and ennobling human characteristic.

Persons as effective moral agents

A minor theme within John Paul II's encyclicals – in as far as he engages with it briefly in *Redemptor Hominis*, *Evangelium vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor* (the latter two in the same form) – is the Christ-like kingly responsibility of the human person. Referencing Gregory of Nyssa, John Paul locates man's kingship in the *imago dei*, being made “in the image of the One who governs the universe... created to exercise dominion over the world.”⁵⁰ This is a daunting call, even if such royalty is “not absolute, but ministerial”, through which man “participates by his dignity in the perfection of the divine archetype.” However much human capacity to fulfil that role may be lost by the fall, it, like human rationality, is restored by the life of Christ. Man is called to participate in Christ's threefold “mission” – as Priest, Prophet and King⁵¹ – which in this case means sharing in the “kingly function – the *munus regale* – of Christ himself”, as John Paul says in his first encyclical, referencing *Lumen Gentium*.⁵² Human moral responsibility is Christ-like in its ministerial dominion.

This ‘kingly’ role echoes a major theme within Wojtyła's pre-papal corpus. In his Lublin lectures Wojtyła stated that “the person's awareness of being an efficient cause of [his] deeds” is the fount of his awareness of the ethical value of any action, and of the value of any human subject.⁵³ The three characteristics of the human person outlined in *The Acting Person* – transcendence, integration, participation – each emphasises how it is self-possession, agency or self-determination that elevates the person and makes self-transcendence possible. The language and theological foundations here are very different from that which we read in the papal encyclicals, but the emphasis on personhood entailing effective moral agency remains constant throughout John Paul's writings.

A clear and (for our purposes) pertinent example of this can be seen in John Paul's discussion of personal, social and ‘structural’ sin in his 1984 Apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*. Here he is clear that sin “is always a personal act”.⁵⁴ The individual may be “conditioned, incited and influenced” by powerful external factors. He may be subjected to “tendencies, defects and habits” in his personal condition. And such factors may “attenuate... his responsibility and guilt.” However, the truth of faith, which is “also confirmed by our experience and reason”, is that the human person is free, and denying the moral responsibility is ultimately to deny their “dignity and freedom”.⁵⁵

This does not mean sin cannot be judged “social” or even “structural”. In one sense all sin is social, in as far as sin invariably affects others. In a second sense – John Paul is specific in his categorisations at this point – some sins are specifically social in that they constitute a deliberate attack on rights, freedom, honour or dignity of another person. Within this category lie the sins of commission or omission on the part of political, economic or trades union leaders, and of workers: the former for failing to strive for the proper “improvement and transformation of society”; the latter “through absenteeism or non-cooperation” failing their industries, families and wider society.⁵⁶

A third, vaguer but still licit understanding of social sin is that of unjust relationships between “various human communities”, such as classes or nations. In such instances, “it has to be admitted” that the vast and generalized nature of the relationship generates an anonymity, with causes that are “complex and not always identifiable.” Here, “social sin” has an obvious and permissible “analogical meaning” but this must, nonetheless, “not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved.” Ultimately, cases of social sin are always the result of “the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins... The real responsibility lies with individuals.”⁵⁷

Talk of social sin becomes illicit when it is placed in *opposition* to personal sin in such a way as minimises or abolishes the latter. According to this view, inherent in the Marxism about which John Paul clearly is speaking at this point, “practically every sin is a social sin”, in the sense of *only* being a social sin. Moral guilt is directed away from “moral conscience of an individual” and towards “some vague entity or anonymous collectivity such as the situation, the system, society, structures or institutions.”⁵⁸ Such an understanding of “social sin” fails to honour the moral agency that is fundamental to John Paul II’s anthropology.

John Paul’s conception of the human is both moral and rational. To be human is to pursue truth through reason, and to exercise moral agency responsibly. Each is a defining human characteristic, grounded in our creation in the image of a God who is truth and our redemption through Christ who exercises royal authority over creation. Although both moral agency and rational powers are wounded by sin, that wound is not fatal but rather healed – though how far is not clear – by Christ.

Persons as relationally constituted

Human relationality is central to John Paul’s anthropology. Every man is his “brother’s keeper”, he writes in *Evangelium vitae*. We are entrusted to one another according “to the

law of reciprocity in giving and receiving, of self-giving and of the acceptance of others". Our freedom "possesses an inherently relational dimension".⁵⁹ According to *Redemptor Hominis*, we write our personal histories through the "numerous bonds, contacts, situations, and social structures linking" us with others, a formulation that is prevented from sliding into subjectivism by the caveat that this self-narration is not only in keeping "with the openness of his spirit within" but also "with the many diverse needs of his body and his existence in time."⁶⁰

As with transcendence, man's relationality has a cognitive and existential dimension. Humans acquire knowledge – both of self and of wider created order – through relationship. In the first of these "biblical man" discovered that he could understand himself "only as 'being in relation' – with himself, with people, with the world and with God."⁶¹ In the second, as the pope articulates at length in section 31 of *Fides et ratio*, humans acquire language, cultural formation, and "a range of truths" through the relationships into which they are born. Human development invariably shapes and reforms these inherited elements, but there remain "many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification." Humans are innately truth-seeking beings, as we have seen, but the truths they hold – whether inherited or acquired – come via trusted, as well as tested, relationships. "The human being – the one who seeks the truth – is also the one who lives by belief."⁶²

This relationality is inevitably tied up with the communicative nature of the human, although, as we shall see, this is less of an emphasis within the theological anthropology of John Paul II than within that of Rowan Williams. The face of every person constitutes "a call to encounter, dialogue and solidarity", he writes in *Evangelium vitae*, although the only encyclical that explores this dialogic nature in any detail is his 1995 letter on ecumenical relations, *Ut unum sint*.⁶³ Here John Paul specifically grounds the "dialogue" that is inherent in ecumenical dialogue in personalism, the human capacity for dialogue being "rooted in the nature of the person and his dignity."⁶⁴ Dialogue is an "indispensable step" along the path towards "human self-realization" both in a "cognitive dimension" – John Paul points out the etymological origins of dialogue lie in the *logos* – and in an "existential dimension". It involves "the human subject in his or her entirety."

Dialogue also, according to John Paul II, presupposes "a desire for reconciliation" and for "unity in truth",⁶⁵ a clarification that might shed light on why the topic receives less

emphasis in his encyclicals. The pope's high view of human reason and the call of truth implies a lesser role for dialogue, because, although humans learn and know through relationship, the power of the truth, the authority of revelation, and the capacity of human reason leave less space for the negotiation and concession that is inherent in true dialogue. As we shall note in the following chapter, both the style and content of Rowan Williams' theology allow for a more open dialogical element within the human relationality that lies central to their theological anthropology.

Where John Paul II is closer to Williams in his conceptualisation of relationality is in his broad understanding of what constitutes communication. Here, the pope is clear, for example in *Evangelium vitae*, that communication cannot be limited to "verbal and explicit, or at least perceptible" communication. To do so would be to exclude those capable of such communication, like the unborn, the dying, and the "radically dependent" from the category of persons possessed of human dignity. Communication includes the verbal and the explicit, but also "the silent language of a profound sharing of affection".⁶⁶ Through such tacit, corporeal, dependent communication, humans enter into the relationships that deepen and develop their personhood, in the same way as they do through verbal and formal communication.

Persons as gift

Gift is central to the human need and capacity for communication and relationship. As John Paul says in *Ut unum sint*, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, "dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas [but] in some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts'."⁶⁷ However, it is also profoundly connected to the other elements of the pope's theological anthropology outlined above and is as close to a summary of that anthropology as one can hope for from such a large and rich corpus of writing. John Paul says in *Dominum et vivificantem* that the Holy Spirit enables man ever more "fully to find himself through a sincere *gift of self*" [emphases added], a phrase adopted from *Gaudium et spes* that he also uses, in one form or another, in *Evangelium vitae*,⁶⁸ *Veritatis splendor*,⁶⁹ *Centesimus annus*,⁷⁰ and *Ut unum sint*⁷¹ and which, he says, "can be said to sum up the whole of Christian anthropology."⁷²

The created order, and in particular human life, is best understood as gift. The Holy Spirit, he writes in *Dominum et vivificantem*, is "uncreated gift" from whom derives "all giving of gifts vis-à-vis creatures (created gift): the gift of existence to all things through creation".⁷³ The core of the Gospel, he writes in *Evangelium vitae*, is the presentation of human life – the inseparable connection "between the person, his life and his bodiliness" – as "a life of

relationship, a gift of God”.⁷⁴ Creation is an economy of gifts that finds its “*fons vivus*” or fountain of life, as the pope puts it in *Dominum et vivificantem*, in the eternal, uncreated gift of the triune God.

If creation can be understood as gift, so can the human capacity for transcendence. Indeed, transcendence is precisely the gift of the self to God. God himself is gift, enabling gift.⁷⁵ The cross is, as well as the self-communication of God to man, “the call to man to share in the divine life by giving himself”.⁷⁶ Christ’s blood, “poured out as the gift of life” reveals to man that his vocation “consists in the sincere gift of self.”⁷⁷ Man is alienated “if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving”.⁷⁸ It is through this “free gift of self” – a gift “made possible by the human person’s essential ‘capacity for transcendence’” – that man truly finds himself”.⁷⁹

God’s gift of creation and his gift of himself in Christ to man, restoring his regal authority, generates the foundations for man’s moral agency and responsibility. Life on earth may be only a penultimate, rather than an “ultimate” reality, he writes in *Evangelium vitae*, “but it remains sacred, entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.”⁸⁰ Similarly, the Gospel is both “a great gift of God and an exacting task for humanity.” In the gift of life and of redemption, “God demands that [man] love, respect and promote life. The gift thus becomes a commandment, and the commandment is itself a gift.”⁸¹

Because human rationality has an inherently relational element, whereby what we know cannot but be affected by who and how we know, it too is captured under the idea of gift. Truth is attained “not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons”. That being so, the capacity and decision “to entrust oneself and one’s life to another person” are not only “among the most significant and expressive human acts” but also fundamental to the human quest for truth.⁸² Similarly, revelation, while in no sense unreasonable, is not “the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason”, but “appears instead as something *gratuitous*.”⁸³ Thus it is in “faithful self-giving” that humans not only achieve “security”, but also find “a fullness of certainty”.⁸⁴

The centrality of gift to relationality will be clear from this: human relationality is the expression of love made possible through the gift of self to the other. “Precisely because man is a personal being,” he wrote in *Memory and Identity*, “it is not possible to fulfil our

duty towards him except by loving him.”⁸⁵ And love, as John Paul says in *Evangelium vitae*, again quoting *Gaudium et spes*, is “a sincere gift of self”.⁸⁶

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in sexual love, about which John Paul wrote and spoke a great deal both before and after becoming pope. Human sexuality and procreation “reach their true and full significance” in light of the idea that “the meaning of life is found in giving and receiving love”⁸⁷ To be a human person is to be a physical body the gift of which to the other in spousal love is the paradigmatic gift of the self. As he says in his *Theology of the Body*, “this union carries within itself a particular awareness of the meaning of that body in the reciprocal self-gift of the persons.”⁸⁸ Rather than the “depersonalized” and “exploited” constructions of sexual love all too familiar in the contemporary world, in which sex becomes the occasion for “self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts”, true sexual love is the supreme moment of human gift: “the sign, place and language of love...of the gift of self and acceptance of another”.⁸⁹

If sexual love is the supreme occasion of gift between humans, the Eucharist is that moment between God and man, “the gift par excellence... of [Christ] himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work”, as he wrote in his last encyclical *Ecclesia et Eucharistia*.⁹⁰ “The source and summit of the Christian life”, according to the encyclical, itself quoting *Lumen Gentium*, the Eucharist can be seen to integrate many of dimensions of his theological anthropology.⁹¹ Taking the bread and wine as gifts of creation, the Eucharist is the gift of Christ’s love and obedience to the Father, “given for our sake, and indeed that of all humanity.”⁹² The means of sharing in Christ’s sacrifice in the inner life of God enables the faithful to participate in it “and inexhaustibly gain its fruits”, in so doing “creat[ing] human community”.⁹³ It is the paradigmatic expression of self-giving,⁹⁴ through which the human person is made new and whole as he is drawn into the life of God.

Political Implications

As noted earlier, John Paul was clear about the link between anthropology and politics and, in particular, between erroneous anthropology and harmful political ideologies and practices. The “fundamental” errors of socialism, utilitarianism and environmental degradation were “anthropological in nature”, just as a properly functioning and just democracy, market economy or state required a correct understanding of the human. Sometimes the link between the created, transcendent, rational, moral, relational, gift-

oriented person and the political system in which he flourishes (or does not) is made explicit; more often it is implicit. Either way, it is always there. Political thought and practice, like moral theology, “requires a sound philosophical vision of human nature.”⁹⁵

John Paul’s link between theological anthropology and political thought and practice takes two forms, critical and constructive, and the remainder of this chapter will deal briefly with the former of these before dwelling in greater detail on the latter as a way of filling out what John Paul saw as the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare.

The critical form

John Paul repeatedly emphasises that the church is not a political community or society, and is not bound to any political system, commonly referencing Section 77 of *Gaudium et spes* in the process.⁹⁶ The Church has no political models to present,⁹⁷ is “not competent to undertake scientific analyses... [and] does not wish to support any theoretical model for the explanation of social phenomena, nor any concrete social system”, as he told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 1994.⁹⁸

There is an important caveat. The church “does not propose economic and political systems or programs”, as he wrote in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, “provided that human dignity is properly respected and promoted, and provided she herself is allowed the room she needs to exercise her ministry in the world.”⁹⁹ She respects “the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order” and “is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution”, as he puts it in *Centesimus annus*, on the basis that her proper contribution to the political order lies in “her vision of the dignity of the person”.¹⁰⁰

This, as we shall note later, is something of an underclaim. John Paul can be clear and explicit in his advocacy of specific political, social and economic arrangements, even if he self-consciously stops short of “solutions”. Nevertheless, this is not simply rhetoric. On the basis that the grounds of its political participation lies in respecting and promoting human dignity, or “safeguard[ing]... the transcendence of the human person”¹⁰¹ or “keep[ing] intact the image and likeness of God himself”¹⁰², the Church’s social teaching offers, what *Centesimus annus* calls an “indispensable and ideal orientation”, by means of which it can judge (in)valid political ideas and systems.

This criticism is levelled primarily at *uncritical* affirmations of the state and the market, “Marxism” and “socialism” on the one hand,¹⁰³ “liberal capitalism” on the other.¹⁰⁴ This is,

of course, a long-standing double-fronted assault for Catholic Social Teaching, as we saw in the previous chapter on Maritain. Indeed, it is coeval with the modern tradition. As John Paul says in *Centesimus annus*, “*Rerum novarum* criticizes two social and economic systems: socialism and liberalism.”¹⁰⁵ In his words of *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, “the Church’s social doctrine adopts a critical attitude towards both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism.”¹⁰⁶ In both instances, the political critique is anthropological in nature.

Marxism and socialism are marked by many practical problems, such as suppressing economic initiative, breeding passivity and dependence, encouraging “submission to the bureaucratic apparatus”, and denying human choice and responsibility.¹⁰⁷ At their heart, however, lies the misconceptualisation of the person as a purely material, passive and self-oriented object. The “essential core” of Marxism, he writes in *Dominum et vivificantem*, can be traced to the struggle between the flesh and the spirit of which St Paul writes in Galatians 5 and Romans 8. The battle is between man’s “limitation and sinfulness, which are essential elements of his psychological and ethical reality” and, from God, “the mystery of the gift, that unceasing self-giving of divine life in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁸ The ensuing struggle is repeated in every historical era and in our own the “flesh” takes the form of the “dialectical and historical materialism” that Marxism has “carried to its extreme practical consequences”.¹⁰⁹ In dialectical materialism, John Paul explains in *Laborem exercens*, man is not the subject of work but “a kind of ‘resultant’ of the economic or production relations prevailing at a given period.”¹¹⁰ Ultimately, it is the denial of man’s agency, his subjective relationality, his capacity for transcendence and his fulfilment in the gift economy of God that lies at the heart of Marxism’s failure.

The pope’s critique of liberal capitalism is more contentious, not least as, in the wake of *Centesimus annus*, a number of commentators read in the encyclical a largely uncritical affirmation of liberal capitalism. Thus, for example, while acknowledging that it would be “tendentious” to interpret *Centesimus annus* “as a full-fledged endorsement of ‘liberalism’”, Russell Hittinger still stated that the encyclical, “makes a decisive turn toward the liberal model of the state,” and offered a model that “closely resemble[d] the modern, Anglo-American understanding of the political state.”¹¹¹ This confusion – the fact that John Paul can state bluntly that the Church’s social doctrine adopts a critical attitude towards liberal capitalism while commentators can simultaneously read an affirmation of the liberal capitalist state in (the last of) his social encyclical(s) – is borne partly of John Paul political method in his encyclicals. As Daniel Finn has observed, rather than analysing conflicts “by

comparing and contrasting competing goods, [John Paul] tends to make strong affirmations about goods on both sides of an argument as well as denunciations about the dangers attendant to each.” The result is that those on each side of the political spectrum are able to hear enough of what they agree to find in the pope’s political theology an affirmation of their position, while ignoring his simultaneous critique.¹¹²

Such ambiguity can be addressed by careful appreciation of the precise way in which he defined his terms. Answering the rhetorical question about whether capitalism should be the global goal following the collapse of communism, the pope carefully explained that if capitalism is taken to be an economic system “which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector,” then “the answer is certainly in the affirmative.”¹¹³

If, conversely, capitalism “favours only those who possess capital and makes work only a means of production”, as he told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 1996, or if it entails “considering human labour solely according to its economic purpose”, it is not acceptable.¹¹⁴ In particular, as he warned the Pontifical Academy the following year, just because socialist planned economies damage civil and economic freedoms, this does not justify models that are diametrically opposed. “Unbridled” markets erode common values, compromise the ecological balance, and generate an “anthropological void”. The human price of the “amazing economic vitality” of the market economy “left to unconditional freedom” is simply too high.¹¹⁵

Such errors come from ignoring the truth about human nature, or, as he puts it when describing Pope Leo XIII’s critique of late nineteenth century capitalism, from detaching the understanding of human freedom “from the duty to respect the rights of others”, orienting it away from the demands of responsibility, relationality and gift, towards “a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest”.¹¹⁶

Plenty of contemporary Catholic commentators, such as those represented in the volume of essays entitled *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy*, insist the structures of a liberal capitalist state need not foster such self-interest but actually are best placed to honour and serve the moral agency that is key to John Paul’s anthropology.¹¹⁷ However, it is not irrelevant that in the passage in *Centesimus annus* in which John Paul attempts to

disambiguate his use of the term capitalist, he says that it might be more appropriate to speak of a “business economy”, “market economy” or simply “free economy”.¹¹⁸

That noted, and however much critics would point out that liberal capitalism and consumerism are not the same thing, it is important to note that in section 36 of *Centesimus annus*, John Paul highlights consumerism as among the “specific problems and threats emerging within the more advanced economies”. The two are not synonymous and it is quite possible to operate a “market economy” without succumbing to the sins of consumerism.¹¹⁹ However, he is clear that “of itself, an economic system does not possess criteria for correctly distinguishing” between true human needs and the artificial ones that “hinder the formation of a mature personality.” Consumption, employment and investment are all in need of moral discipline, and the generation of lifestyles marked by “the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth” lies beyond capitalism’s ability. Thus, however licit market economies might be, in contrast to the Marxist-socialist system John Paul’s condemnation of which is unqualified, such an economy requires careful ethical policing to prevent its eroding the personhood it is capable of fostering.

The constructive form: work

However clear John Paul is in his anthropological criticism of deficient political ideologies, it is important to emphasise that his vision of the state is not merely a middle way between the two inadequate alternatives. “The Church’s social doctrine is not a ‘third way’ between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism,” he wrote in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.¹²⁰ His conceptualisation of the state, like the church’s social doctrine, “constitutes a category of its own”, not “an ideology”, but rather a response to the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, “which is at once earthly and transcendent”. This response is, I argue, essentially three-fold, at least when it comes to the question of ‘welfare’, the three pillars of John Paul’s conceptualisation of the state’s duty vis-à-vis welfare, in the light of his theological anthropology, being work, family, and (what I shall term) associational solidarity. But the greatest of these is work, “a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question,”¹²¹ as he told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

Work is the focus of John Paul’s first social encyclical, *Laborem exercens*, its root in his understanding of the person made explicit in the letter’s opening blessing: “Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work.”¹²² A material

moral agent that is simultaneously part of and transcends the created order, man is made for work, a characteristic that “distinguish[es him] from the rest of creatures.”¹²³

The good of work is two-fold, objective and subjective. The former involves the “dominion” over and “master[y]” of creation,¹²⁴ “transforming nature”,¹²⁵ and serving God as his agent in bringing order to a creation disordered by sin. The latter involves the transformation of the self, man’s “fulfilment as a human being”, the “virtue” of work enabling him to become “more a human being”.¹²⁶ John Paul is clear that the latter has priority over the former, a priority justified by his personalistic anthropology: “the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person.”¹²⁷ The result is that however true it may be that man is destined for and called to work, “in the first place work is ‘for man’ and not man ‘for work’,” a conclusion of immense significance when it comes to the justification for state intervention in the market.¹²⁸

It is from this foundation of work, grounded in his theological anthropology, that John Paul builds up a critical appreciation of the market economy that is central to his conceptualisation of welfare. *Laborem exercens*, and later *Centesimus annus*, is critical of the way in which work is treated as a commodity, and man “an instrument of production”, thereby ignoring and undermining the dignity proper to the person. This leads him to “reaffirm the value of manual labour” and criticise substantial salary differences.¹²⁹ He critiques “the human price” of globalisation.¹³⁰ He condemns the “unbridled market” for creating “an anthropological void”¹³¹ and insists that deregulation is judged according to its effect on “the primacy of the human person.”¹³² He argues, in *Centesimus annus*, that just “as the person fully realizes himself in the free gift of self”, so ownership of goods is morally justified in as far as it generates “opportunities for work and human growth for all.”¹³³ He argues, more controversially, for “the priority of labour over capital”, on account of labour being a “primary efficient cause”, with capital only “a mere ... instrumental” one,¹³⁴ even while he insists, in the following section of *Laborem exercens*, that labour can “in no way... be opposed to capital or capital to labour.”¹³⁵ Overall, he advocates the terms “business economy”, “market economy” or “free economy” in place of “capitalism”¹³⁶ and insists that the market is “appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.”¹³⁷

It is in this way that the state’s principle function in attending to the welfare for society lies in its supervision and regulation of the market economy to ensure that the person’s

primacy, agency, dignity, and capacity to realise himself through the “free gift of self” is honoured. It is a crucial and non-transferable role, contrary to those who thought they found in the pope’s stridently anti-Marxist message a fellow advocate a heavily deregulated, ‘neo-liberal’ state, but it is also an indirect role, as John Paul emphasises in chapter 48 of *Centesimus annus*. The state’s duty may be to “oversee[...] and direct[...] the exercise of human rights in the economic sector”, but the “primary responsibility” within this duty lies not with the state itself but with the “individuals” and the “various groups and associations” that comprise “society”. Were this not so, the state would be ineluctably drawn into “controll[ing] every aspect of economic life”.

The pope outlines this essential, if indirect, responsibility in varying degrees of specificity. The role of the state is to guarantee “individual freedom and private property”,¹³⁸ to defend those “collective goods” that constitute the “essential framework for the legitimate pursuit of personal goals”,¹³⁹ such as “a stable currency and efficient public services”,¹⁴⁰ and generally to determine “the juridical framework within which economic affairs are to be conducted”.¹⁴¹

Such a list has allowed some commentators to claim that the Pope “reserves juridical language” for the state’s responsibilities, and “does not confuse it with the societal and cultural spheres in which the language of solidarity is most appropriate.”¹⁴² There is some measure of truth in this, in as far as (as Hittinger states) the “order of justice” that John Paul envisions as a state responsibility is “narrow and specific” in the sense that it is to *facilitate* a “myriad of cultural, religious, and social activities which bring about the solidarist ends which...are in accord with the social nature of man”, rather than securing such solidarist ends directly itself.¹⁴³

However, this formulation is liable to incline the reading of John Paul II’s vision of the state towards the minimal, and is undermined in part by the pope’s subsequent remarks to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences to the effect that the duty of the state is to “subject market laws to solidarity,”¹⁴⁴ and in part by the sheer range, depth and detail of the state’s proper intervention, which seems to go beyond a narrow reading of ‘juridical’.

Thus, John Paul repeatedly emphasises that it is the duty of the state to minimise unemployment and ensure maximal participation in the economy. Understanding the state as what he calls an “indirect employer”, John Paul writes in *Laborem exercens* that the state must “make provision for *overall planning* with regard to the different kinds of work.”¹⁴⁵

Economic policies, he wrote in *Centesimus annus*, should be aimed “at ensuring balanced growth and full employment.”¹⁴⁶

Precisely what this entails is not entirely clear, perhaps because John Paul himself appears to modify his view slightly during his papacy. In the early 1980s, state “planning” seems to envisage substantial activity, such as the “discovery” (and presumably also the encouragement) of “the right proportions between the different kinds of employment,” such as “work on the land, in industry, in the various services, white-collar work and scientific or artistic work.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, in section 14 of *Laborem exercens*, he is prepared to countenance nationalisation of industries,¹⁴⁸ albeit critically and with reservations.¹⁴⁹ This seems more interventionist than he is willing to countenance a decade later at the time of *Centesimus annus*, in which he writes that the state has a duty is to sustain business activities by “creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities”, by “stimulating those activities where they are lacking”, by intervening with “monopolies... or obstacles to development”, and by supporting business activities “in moments of crisis.”¹⁵⁰

That recognised, we should not make too much of this apparent shift in position vis-à-vis state intervention in the economy. His advocacy of intervention in *Laborem exercens* is limited and caveated, and his preference, when it comes to the “socialisation” of industry, is not for straightforward nationalisation but for finding means to “associate labour with the ownership of capital” and producing a wide range of intermediate bodies “with economic, social and cultural purposes” that would exercise “real autonomy with regard to the public powers”.¹⁵¹ Similarly, in *Centesimus annus* John Paul is able to envision the State exercising “a substitute function” in the economy, albeit “in exceptional circumstances”, such as when social sectors or business systems “are too weak or are just getting under way, and are not equal to the task at hand.”¹⁵² Moreover, five years after the publication of *Centesimus annus*, he told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences that it was the duty of the State (and of businesses), “to create a better distribution of tasks among all workers,”¹⁵³ a sentiment that would not have been out of place in *Laborem exercens*.

Either way, however much state intervention John Paul II does envisage, it is clear that he places upon the state a significant indirect and on occasion direct responsibility for protecting the welfare of persons by means of securing an economic climate conducive to maximal, meaningful employment. Moreover, the employment must be directed to the true good of the human person, rather than mere economic growth. The state (and society)

“must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount for savings.”¹⁵⁴ It must legislate against “forms of exploitation”, especially of vulnerable workers, immigrants and those “on the margins of society”.¹⁵⁵ It must guarantee (presumably meaning, legislate for) “‘humane’ working hours” and “adequate free-time”, alongside the right “to express one’s own personality at the work-place without suffering any affront to one’s conscience or personal dignity,”¹⁵⁶ and the right to a working environment that is “not harmful to the workers’ physical health or to their moral integrity.”¹⁵⁷

If, for whatever reason, full employment is not possible, it is the state’s responsibility to protect the welfare of potential workers “through unemployment insurance and [the] retraining programmes” necessary for their reintroduction into the productive economy.¹⁵⁸ No less important, and in a relatively rare example of John Paul outlining a unmediated welfare relationship between state and citizen, he writes in *Laborem exercens*, that the state has an obligation to provide unemployment benefits, “suitable grants indispensable for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families”, a duty justified as springing from the “fundamental principle” of “the common use of goods.”¹⁵⁹ In a similar vein, *Laborem exercens* advocates that pension and old age insurance should be made available, alongside healthcare, in the form of accident and “medical” assistance that should be “easily available for workers”, and that as far as possible “it should be cheap or even free of charge.”¹⁶⁰ These last three rights are framed as responsibilities primarily of direct employers but given the state’s duty to secure an economy that recognises and serves the human person in, they become indirect state responsibilities also.

Thus, in addition to the basic ‘juridical’ framework for a free market, and in addition to fundamental duty to provide “for the defence and preservation of [those] common goods such as the natural and human environments” that cannot be safeguarded by market forces alone,¹⁶¹ John Paul envisions a state whose main responsibility for the welfare of citizens is substantial but indirect, mediated through its role of securing a market that is free but that respects and protects the human person in all his dimensions.

The constructive form: family

The second pillar of John Paul’s understanding of state and welfare is the family, although as with his writing on work, in an indirect way. The family is not to be understood as a direct ‘provider’ of the kind of ‘services’ that we popularly associate with welfare, except perhaps of education and then only to a limited degree, but it is the essential incubator of

human personhood, and therefore an institution that the state must respect, protect and, when appropriate, aid.

Many of the themes of John Paul's theological anthropology are evident in his discussion of the family, and can be seen in his 1994 *Letter to Families*, written to mark the United Nation's declaration of that year as the International Year of the Family. It is "through the body" that man and woman form the "communion of persons" that defines the marriage that lies at the heart of the family: "the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation."¹⁶² The "primordial model" of the family is found "in the Trinitarian mystery of [God's] life", the relational "we" of the Trinity being "the eternal pattern" of the human "we" in general, but specifically of the "we" of marriage.¹⁶³

The "covenant" of marriage, to use the language of the Second Vatican Council that John Paul quotes, is the basis for the self-giving of man and woman to each other.¹⁶⁴ The person realizes himself "by the exercise of freedom in truth", though this freedom is not licence "to do absolutely anything" but "means a gift of self", necessitating "an interior discipline of the gift", which is enabled through the "communion of persons" we find "at the very heart of each family". This is nothing less than "the very heart of the Gospel truth about freedom."¹⁶⁵ The person cannot be developed, even understood, without the concept of family, which stands "at the centre and the heart of the civilization of love", with significant implications for nation, state, and welfare.¹⁶⁶

John Paul identifies what he calls an "almost organic link" between the family and the nation in his 1994 *Letter to Families*.¹⁶⁷ He makes the same point in his 2005 book *Memory and Identity*, when he roots legitimate patriotism, the kind that "leads to a properly ordered social love",¹⁶⁸ in the fourth commandment¹⁶⁹, and roots both family and nation as "'natural' societies" that have their origins in the particular bonds of "human nature".¹⁷⁰ Although very clear that the family must in no way be instrumentalised to serve any allegedly greater good, he does, in his *Letter to Families*, place upon it the duty of linking the growing person with their wider national or ethnic culture. "In one sense," he says carefully, no doubt alert to how such sentiments were used by what Chappel calls the 'Catholic paternalists' of the inter-war period, "parents also give birth to children for the nation, so that they can be members of it and can share in its historic and cultural heritage."¹⁷¹

If the family should “in one sense” serve the nation, it should, in another, be served by the nation’s state.¹⁷² This is where the family’s primary welfare role is introduced. The basic “cell” of society, families “are the first and most important educators” of children, education understood not simply in the sense of passing on knowledge but in a holistic and personalistic sense, “a unique process for which the mutual communion of persons has immense importance”.¹⁷³

Families are not, however, competent to deliver this single-handedly.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the state to assist or “play a role” in helping families in their duty of education, families sharing their “educational mission” with other “individuals or institutions.” This is not solely the role of the state: John Paul is careful to emphasise that “state assistance” should not exclude “private initiatives”.¹⁷⁵ Nor it is a risk-free one: the pope is at pains to stress that “excessive intrusiveness” on the part of the State is “detrimental” and constitutes “an open violation of the rights of the family”. The “self-sufficient” family “should be left to act on its own”, and only when the family is not self-sufficient “does the State have the authority and duty to intervene.”¹⁷⁶ As elsewhere, but perhaps with particular acuteness, the “mission of education” must be carried in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.¹⁷⁷

In a similar fashion, and linking families back to the importance of work, the state must ensure that work serves the family (just as it does the person), rather than vice versa. The family, he writes in *Laborem exercens*, is not only the “the first school of work”, in as far as it nurtures the young in virtues necessary for productive labour, but also “a community made possible by work.”¹⁷⁸ This means intervening in the economy to minimise the unemployment that is “one of the most serious threats to family life”.¹⁷⁹ It means advocating – although it is not clear whether this also means legislating for – just remuneration for the work of those who are responsible for their families. This can take the form of a “family wage”, which he defines in *Laborem exercens* as “a single salary given to the head of the family for his work, sufficient for the needs of the family without the other spouse having to take up gainful employment outside the home”. Or it can take the form of other social measures such as “family allowances” or “grants to mothers devoting themselves exclusively to their families”, the sum of which should correspond to the actual needs of those “not in a position to assume proper responsibility for their own lives.”¹⁸⁰ This obviously means children although in *Centesimus annus* he also explicitly includes the elderly, in order to “strengthen relations between generations”.¹⁸¹

It was a theme he returned to in his later addresses to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences,¹⁸² one of which sees one of his more positive assessments of state welfare provision. Whereas once it was the duty of the community to ensure that each person had “his just share in the fruits of work and in all circumstances live[d] with dignity”, a duty that was borne of the natural “solidarity between generations”, in the industrial age, states set “up social welfare plans” to assist families, with particular regard to young people (via education) and older ones (via pension funds for retirees). It is fortunate, he goes on to say, that “a sense of responsibility has developed in people thanks to a *real national solidarity*, so as not to exclude anyone and to give access to a social benefits coverage to all”, a sentiment that emphasises the reciprocal relationship between family, nation, and state, the first helping generate the second’s solidarity that allows the third second to justify and discharge its responsibilities to the first.”¹⁸³ He struck a similar note the following years, inviting those with the responsibility for government to tackle the potentially deleterious side-effects of globalisation (the dominant focus of his addresses to the Academy) and to put in place “systems of solidarity that take into account the changes caused by globalisation.”¹⁸⁴

John Paul’s discussion of the family vis-à-vis the state provision of welfare thus adopts a similar line as his discussion of work. In both instances it is what we might call ‘intermediary bodies’ – direct employers, the family – who have primary duty of serving the good of the person that lies at the heart of welfare. In both instances, the state is called in to assist and supplement the efforts of those bodies, but in both instances there are red lines drawn by the principle of subsidiarity that it must respect except for exceptional circumstances and then only temporarily.

The constructive form: associational solidarity

A final pillar of John Paul’s understanding of welfare, standing alongside work and family, is what we might call ‘associational solidarity’.

As with families, although to a less pronounced extent, human personhood is nurtured by the associational activities of civil society. As he says in *Centesimus annus*, it is “in interrelationships on many levels that a person lives, and that society becomes more ‘personalized’.”¹⁸⁵ In a warning that would become increasingly pertinent over the coming years, the pope said that opportunity for such solidarity was often “suffocated” between the two poles of the state and the marketplace.¹⁸⁶ The person does not exist simply as “a producer and consumer of goods, or as an object of State administration”, but as a being

“who seeks... and strives to live in [the] truth”, his understanding of which is realised and deepened “through a dialogue which involves past and future generations.”¹⁸⁷ The solidarity of association, just like the subjective value of work and the life of the family, developed and nurtured personhood and was thus a pillar of social welfare.

John Paul does not have a correspondingly fixed and established vocabulary, as he does for work and family, when it comes to defining associational solidarity, and he casts his definitional net wide: “economic, social, political and cultural groups”,¹⁸⁸ “the different communities [of] family, ... cultural milieu, associations, the nation and the community of nations”,¹⁸⁹ “nations themselves, communities, ethnic or religious groups, families or individuals.”¹⁹⁰ However, within this mixture, three emerge as having clearer outlines and a clear role vis-à-vis the provision of welfare.

John Paul’s full-throated endorsement of the activity of trades unions and workers organisations, audible in all three major social encyclicals but particularly so in *Centesimus annus*, was another factor that marked him off from some of his free-market supporters. Trades unions were “an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies,” up to and including strikes and work stoppages which he recognised in *Laborem exercens* as a “legitimate” if “extreme” measure.¹⁹¹ To deny workers freedom to organize and to form unions was a denial of their fundamental human rights, he wrote in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.¹⁹² Trades unions were “decisive” in negotiating contracts, minimum salaries and working conditions for employees, he claimed in *Centesimus annus*.¹⁹³ They enabled workers to “express themselves” and develop an “authentic” and more “fully human” culture of work.¹⁹⁴ They “defend workers’ rights”, protect “their interests as persons” and offer “a wide range of opportunities for commitment.”¹⁹⁵ All in all, partly through the ends of a more just and fairer workplace and economy, and partly through the participatory means of commitment and collaboration, trades unions were an essential vehicle for developing the personhood at the core of welfare.

Alongside trades unions and similar workers’ organisations, John Paul cites cooperatives, though only in *Centesimus annus*, as examples of associational solidarity. In the context of Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum*, which John Paul’s encyclical was written to commemorate, the pope explains how the injustices of the market were addressed by society beginning to organise itself “through the establishment of effective instruments of solidarity”. Within this process, Christians made a notable contribution “in establishing producers’,

consumers' and credit cooperatives", and through promoting "general education and professional training" by means of which human dignity was protected and the common good established.¹⁹⁶

Thirdly, he talks of "charity" as a critical element. Here, the terminology is especially tendentious as, in debates about welfare, "charity" can be used, both appreciatively and critically, as precisely that which precludes any form of state intervention. Yet this is not the sense in which it is used by John Paul who, in line with familiar Catholic teaching, does not so much oppose charity to the state, as treat the proper relationship between the two as an instantiation of the principle of subsidiarity.

This is illustrated by his discussion in section 88 of *Evangelium vitae* in which he advocates the promotion of vocations and implementation of "long-term practical projects" that respond to the Pauline summons to "to bear each other's burdens".¹⁹⁷ Writing of the first stage of life, he advocates centres "for natural methods of regulating fertility", marriage and family counselling agencies, and "centres of assistance and homes" in which new life is welcomed, where the activity is carried out "in accordance with an anthropology consistent with the Christian vision of the person" and in particular where every decision is guided "by the ideal of the sincere gift of self." Writing of times of hardship, maladjustment, sickness or rejection, he advocates programmes and communities for treating drug addiction, residential communities "for minors or the mentally ill", and care and relief centres for AIDS patients. Such "associations for solidarity", especially those dedicated to serve the disabled, "are eloquent expressions of what charity is able to devise". Finally, writing of the end of life, he says it is "again charity" that finds the "most appropriate" means of enabling the elderly, particularly those unable to care for themselves, and the terminally ill "to enjoy genuinely humane assistance" and receive an adequate response to their material and other needs, such as "their anxiety and their loneliness."

In such end of life issues, the role of families is "indispensable" yet insufficient, families needing much help "from social welfare agencies" and "suitable medical and social services available in public institutions", such as palliative care facilities. More broadly, the welfare of the young, old, dying, infirm and needy merits the support of the state but in line with the principle of subsidiary, which sees families, "communities" and "associations for solidarity" doing what they can "in order to meet their problems in a truly human way".¹⁹⁸

The “Social Assistance State”

Living most of his life in the shadow of a hyperactive and oppressive state, John Paul II had persistent and significant reservations concerning the state’s welfare role. This was most obviously the case in section 48 of *Centesimus annus* where his assessment of the “new type of State, the so-called “Welfare State” is passively critical. He talks of the “vastly expanded” range of state “intervention” over recent years, acknowledging that this has happened (“in some countries”) in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person.

However, critics have made “harsh criticisms” of its “excesses and abuses”, dubbing it the “Social Assistance State”. In John Paul’s terms, its “malfunctions and defects” are the result of an “inadequate understanding” of the tasks proper to the State and, behind that, the nature and good of the person the state must serve. He spells this out.

Too readily, the Social Assistance State ignores the principles of subsidiarity, thereby “depriving society of its responsibility”, leading to “a loss of human energies” and “an inordinate increase of public agencies” and “an enormous increase in spending”. Perhaps most pertinently, although they may be well intentioned, such public agencies are dominated “more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients,” which ultimately undermine the unique transcendent dignity and call for self-gift that lies at the heart of every person. People’s true needs go beyond the material and are best understood and satisfied by those who are closest to them:

“One thinks of the condition of refugees, immigrants, the elderly, the sick, and all those in circumstances which call for assistance, such as drug abusers: all these people can be helped effectively only by those who offer them genuine fraternal support, in addition to the necessary care.”¹⁹⁹

The pope made a similar point in an address to a French synod in the same year, outlining what he saw as two major problems with the Social Assistance State. First, such a state all too easily reduces the particular needs of the needy to “to general categories”, such “confused egalitarianism” obscuring the special requirements of, for example, large families, people with disabilities, the elderly, refugees or immigrants. Secondly, in a warning that roots his attitude to welfare back into his anthropology, he claims that state assistance of this nature reduces and weakens “the ‘personality’ of society”, attempting to counter growing “gaps in social solidarity” left by society’s increasing “individualism” and “atomization” through

“coercive structures and bureaucratic mechanisms,” in so doing replacing one form of dehumanisation with another, the *state* undermining the personhood of citizens in attempt to address the *market’s* undermining of them.

“To achieve the common good in a way that is truly human,” he writes, “there must be a proper balance between the co-responsibility of the members of society and the commitment of the state.”²⁰⁰ The welfare state must serve the person, not vice versa, and it is to do so by means of the intermediate categories of work, family and associations of solidarity.

Conclusion

John Paul II contributes significantly to our cumulative picture of theological anthropology and its implications for the welfare state, both affirming and adding to the ideas emerging from the work of Temple and Maritain. The affirmative elements will be clear. John Paul firmly and repeatedly underlines the necessary connection between our understanding of the person and the state. His anthropology is emphatically multi-dimensional. He highlights createdness, transcendence, agency, and relationality as fundamental to human nature and good in much the same way as do Temple and Maritain, albeit with particularly strong emphasis on transcendence and agency. His consequent emphasis on the importance of meaningful and just patterns of work, and of the institutions of “associational solidarity”, in the form of trades unions, cooperatives, and charitable endeavours, as the primary vehicles for providing ‘welfare’ is similarly consonant with the ideas of Temple and Maritain.

That recognised, his contribution to the discussion goes beyond straightforward affirmation. First, John Paul II’s papal writings and speeches add a more explicitly biblical and, indeed, Christological approach than either Maritain or Temple. From *Redemptor hominis* on, John Paul clearly roots his idea of the human in scripture, predominantly the early chapters of Genesis and the gospels, in a way that is largely absent in the work of Temple and Maritain.

Second, John Paul places a particularly strong emphasis on human reason, on agency, and on the human commission share “Christ’s kingly mission” on earth, as foundational to personality. Reason and agency are embodied, fallible, and can be socially distorted, and the pope is careful to eschew any hubristic notions of rationality. Nevertheless, his emphasis on reason in particular is somewhat less evident in Temple and Maritain (and

indeed in Rowan Williams' work), and it goes some way to explaining the focus John Paul puts on human agency.

Third, John Paul clearly shares and affirms Temple's and Maritain's conception of the human as gift, but his theology of gift is notably more foundational and more fully worked through than theirs. Gift is a repeated emphasis in his papal writings, explicitly linked to the Trinity, creation, gospel, cross, Eucharist, the meaning of human life, and personal "certainty and security".²⁰¹ In John Paul II, we get a more comprehensive picture of how the idea of the person as gift captures and encompasses the entirety of human nature and the human good.

Fourth, John Paul is less ambivalent about the impact of sin in human affairs, acknowledging and determinedly tracing human sin to the person, albeit sometimes greatly obscured and exacerbated by structural and cultural contexts. For all that sin may be understood, in the right light, as 'social', ultimately for John Paul it is more obviously personal than for Temple or Maritain (or, as we shall see, Williams). This does not mean its impact on human nature is more severe or deleterious, however. John Paul never articulates an understanding of sin comparable to Temple in the late 1930s or to Maritain's musings, in *Freedom in the Modern World*, about "the question of the Evil One as an actor in history."²⁰² Rather, the pope's conception of sin is rooted finally in the person, but in a way that wounds our personal capacity for rationality, relationality and gift, rather than obliterates them.

These distinctive elements of John Paul's anthropology – as well, of course, as his somewhat different political context, and his utterly different formative experiences – inform his theology of the state. The result is that, although his conception of the welfare – or 'social assistance' – state is recognisably that of Temple and Maritain, he is fundamentally more antagonistic to the idea of a welfare state, by no means uncompromising in his hostility but more noticeably critical of its legitimacy, processes and results.

Importantly for our purposes, however, this antagonism conveys itself not simply negatively, through scepticism concerning the function of the state, but positively, through his singular and thoroughly worked through conception of the role of work and of the family in securing human welfare. Again, neither of these elements is at odds with the ideas of Temple and Maritain, but John Paul's emphasis on both does introduce a new note into

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our discussion of how a multi-dimensional theological conception of personhood should inform our theology of the state.

John Paul II clearly, therefore, shares many of the foundational elements of anthropology that this thesis highlights – the material, social, transcendent, and ultimately gift-oriented nature of the human – and endorses a number of their implications – in particular the centrality of associational activity to the ‘provision’ of welfare. However, he also adds important new dimensions and emphases, in his rational, agential, and sinful understanding of the person, and in his articulation of work and family as foundational to welfare.

¹ de Lubac (1989), pp. 171-72.

² John Paul II (1999), *Gift and Mystery*, p. 67.

³ Spinello (2012), p. 217

⁴ John Paul II (1994), *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 199.

⁵ For example *Laborem exercens* #2, *Dives in misericordia* #2, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #6, etc. Interestingly, his major social encyclical *Centesimus annus* is one of the few to ignore *Gaudium et spes* entirely.

⁶ Kupczak (2000); *Gaudium et spes* #63

⁷ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* (2005), pp. 127, 124.

⁸ Quoted in Spinello (2012), p. ix

⁹ *Centesimus annus* #11

¹⁰ See for example Kupczak (2000); Buttiglione (1997); Acosta and Reimers (2016); Billias (2008)

¹¹ Spinello (2012) p. 12

¹² Quoted in Kupczak (2000), *Destined for Liberty*, p. xii

¹³ *Dives in misericordia* #1

¹⁴ *Gaudium et spes* #22. On the centrality of this see Spinello (2012), pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ Spinello (2012), p. xi.

¹⁶ *Centesimus annus* #13

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, p. 39.

¹⁸ *Evangelium vitae* #2

¹⁹ John Paul II (PASS, 1997), #7

²⁰ *Centesimus annus* #37

²¹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #29

²² Spinello (2012), p. 46.

²³ Alexander (2007), chapter 11.

²⁴ *Dives in misericordia*, #44

²⁵ See, for example, *Laborem exercens* #13

²⁶ *Tertio millennio adveniente*, #10. See also *Fides et ratio* #11

²⁷ *Evangelium vitae* #2

²⁸ *Gaudium et spes* #76 quoted in John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, p. 135

²⁹ *Veritatis splendor* #46.

³⁰ *Evangelium vitae* #23

³¹ *Evangelium vitae* ##18, 20

³² Spinello (2012), p. 33.

³³ *Dominum et vivificantem* #54

³⁴ *Centesimus annus* #13

³⁵ *Fides et ratio* ##83-84

³⁶ *Fides et ratio* #83, emphases added.

³⁷ *Fides et ratio*, #13, quoting Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, #2

³⁸ *Evangelium vitae* #2

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- ³⁹ *Laborem exercens* ##24-26
- ⁴⁰ *Fides et ratio* #23
- ⁴¹ *Fides et ratio* #28; emphases original
- ⁴² *Fides et ratio* #5
- ⁴³ *Fides et ratio* #17
- ⁴⁴ *Fides et ratio* #22
- ⁴⁵ *Fides et ratio* # 60, *Gaudium et spes* # 14-15
- ⁴⁶ *Fides et ratio* #22
- ⁴⁷ *Fides et ratio* #76
- ⁴⁸ *Veritatis splendor* #48
- ⁴⁹ *Fides et ratio* #22
- ⁵⁰ *Evangelium vitae* #52; *Veritatis splendor* #38
- ⁵¹ *Laborem exercens* # 24
- ⁵² *Redemptor hominis* #16
- ⁵³ Quoted in Kupczak (2000), p. 34.
- ⁵⁴ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* #16
- ⁵⁵ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* #16
- ⁵⁶ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* #16
- ⁵⁷ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* #16
- ⁵⁸ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* #16
- ⁵⁹ *Evangelium vitae* #19, #76
- ⁶⁰ *Redemptor hominis* #14
- ⁶¹ *Fides et ratio* #21
- ⁶² *Fides et ratio* #31
- ⁶³ *Evangelium vitae* #83
- ⁶⁴ *Ut unum sint* #28
- ⁶⁵ *Ut unum sint* #29, #34
- ⁶⁶ *Evangelium vitae* #19
- ⁶⁷ *Ut unum sint* #28; quoting *Lumen gentium* #13
- ⁶⁸ *Evangelium vitae* ##19, 23, 25, 96, 97, 99, 49, 76, 81, 86, 88, 93
- ⁶⁹ *Veritatis splendor* ##21,48 , 87, 89
- ⁷⁰ *Centesimus annus* ##41, 43
- ⁷¹ *Ut unum sint* #1
- ⁷² *Dominum et vivificantem* #59
- ⁷³ *Dominum et vivificantem* #2
- ⁷⁴ *Evangelium vitae* #81
- ⁷⁵ *Dominum et vivificantem* #10
- ⁷⁶ *Dives in misericordia* #7
- ⁷⁷ *Evangelium vitae* #25
- ⁷⁸ *Centesimus annus* #41
- ⁷⁹ *Centesimus annus* #41, again referencing *Gaudium et spes* #24
- ⁸⁰ *Evangelium vitae* #2
- ⁸¹ *Evangelium vitae* #52
- ⁸² *Fides et ratio* #33
- ⁸³ *Fides et ratio* #15; emphases added.
- ⁸⁴ *Fides et ratio* #32
- ⁸⁵ *Memory and Identity*, p. 150
- ⁸⁶ *Evangelium vitae* #96, quoting *Gaudium et spes* #24
- ⁸⁷ *Evangelium vitae* #81
- ⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them* (2006), 10.5 (p.169). Emphases original.
- ⁸⁹ *Evangelium vitae* #23
- ⁹⁰ *Ecclesia et eucharistia* #11
- ⁹¹ *Lumen gentium* #11
- ⁹² *Ecclesia et eucharistia* #13
- ⁹³ *Ecclesia et eucharistia* #11, #24
- ⁹⁴ Spinello (2012), p. 208.
- ⁹⁵ *Fides et ratio* #68

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⁹⁶ See, for example, *Redemptor hominis* #13, *Centesimus annus* #25. The full relevant quotation from *Gaudium et spes* is “The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person,” a quotation of which headed up the Polish edition of his book *The Acting Person*.

⁹⁷ *Centesimus annus* #43

⁹⁸ John Paul II (PASS, 1994), #6

⁹⁹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #41

¹⁰⁰ *Centesimus annus* #47

¹⁰¹ As he puts it in *Redemptor hominis* #13, again quoting *Gaudium et spes* #76

¹⁰² *Redemptor hominis* #13

¹⁰³ A note on terms. John Paul mentioned Marxism in five of his encyclicals – *Laborem exercens*, *Dominum et vivificantem*, *Centesimus annus*, *Veritatis splendor*, and *Fides et ratio* – and socialism in two – *Laborem exercens* and (only in any detail in) *Centesimus annus*. He also wrote about “dialectical materialism” in *Laborem exercens* and *Dominum et vivificantem*, “collectivism” in *Laborem exercens*, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, and *Centesimus annus*, and “communism” in *Laborem exercens*, *Centesimus annus* and *Fides et ratio*. A number of points may be made about this. Firstly, his discussion of these ideologies is not limited to his so-called social encyclicals (*Laborem exercens*, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, and *Centesimus annus*), with the implication that the errant anthropology that underlies them is not simply a ‘political’ or ‘social’ matter but affects questions of knowledge and reason (*Fides et ratio*) and even the action of the Holy Spirit in the human person (*Dominum et vivificantem*). Second, there was no single political ideology against which John Paul wrote. Marxism, socialism, dialectical materialism and communism each had different elements, depending in part on whether they are understood as ideas or fully effected political systems. For the sake of this debate, I will refer to Marxism and socialism largely because the two share much and, crucially, are both rooted in the same anthropological errors.

¹⁰⁴ A second note on terms. John Paul is equally broad in his use of terms here – he speaks of “liberalism”, “capitalism”, and “liberal capitalism” – but more focused in where he uses them, each being mentioned in *Laborem exercens* and *Centesimus annus*, the last also being found in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. The single exception is “liberalism” which is used, in a different form, in *Veritatis splendor*, in which he writes “The penchant for empirical observation, the procedures of scientific objectification, technological progress and certain forms of liberalism have led to these two terms [nature and freedom] being set in opposition, as if a dialectic, if not an absolute conflict, between freedom and nature were characteristic of the structure of human history” (*Veritatis splendor* #46)

¹⁰⁵ *Centesimus annus* #10

¹⁰⁶ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #21

¹⁰⁷ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #15 and *Centesimus annus* #13 outline these in greater detail.

¹⁰⁸ *Dives in misericordia* #55

¹⁰⁹ *Dominum et vivificantem* #56.

¹¹⁰ *Laborem exercens* #13

¹¹¹ Hittinger (1991), pp. 957, 992.

¹¹² Finn (1998), pp. 663-64.

¹¹³ *Centesimus annus* #42

¹¹⁴ John Paul II (PASS, 1996), #6

¹¹⁵ John Paul II (PASS, 1997)

¹¹⁶ *Centesimus annus* #17

¹¹⁷ Booth (2007; rev. 2014)

¹¹⁸ *Centesimus annus* #42

¹¹⁹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #28

¹²⁰ *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #41.

¹²¹ *Laborem exercens* #3

¹²² *Laborem exercens*, Blessing

¹²³ *Laborem exercens*, Blessing

¹²⁴ *Laborem exercens* #4

¹²⁵ *Laborem exercens* #9

¹²⁶ *Laborem exercens* #9

¹²⁷ *Laborem exercens* #6

¹²⁸ *Laborem exercens* #6

¹²⁹ John Paul II (PASS, 1999), ## 10-11 as an example of these two criticisms

¹³⁰ John Paul II (PASS, 1997), #3

¹³¹ John Paul II (PASS, 1997), #5

¹³² John Paul II (PASS, 1997), #3

¹³³ *Centesimus annus* #43

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- ¹³⁴ *Laborem exercens* #12
- ¹³⁵ *Laborem exercens* #13
- ¹³⁶ *Centesimus annus* #42. But see also *Laborem exercens* #14: “The position of ‘rigid’ capitalism continues to remain unacceptable, namely the position that defends the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production as an untouchable ‘dogma’ of economic life.”
- ¹³⁷ *Centesimus annus* #35
- ¹³⁸ *Centesimus annus* #48
- ¹³⁹ *Centesimus annus* #40
- ¹⁴⁰ *Centesimus annus* #48
- ¹⁴¹ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁴² Hittinger (1991), p. 974.
- ¹⁴³ Hittinger (1991), p. 975.
- ¹⁴⁴ John Paul II (PASS, 2002), #5
- ¹⁴⁵ *Laborem exercens* #18, emphases original.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁴⁷ *Laborem exercens* #18
- ¹⁴⁸ *Laborem exercens* #14
- ¹⁴⁹ *Laborem exercens* #14
- ¹⁵⁰ *Centesimus annus* #48
- ¹⁵¹ *Laborem exercens* #14
- ¹⁵² *Centesimus annus* #48.
- ¹⁵³ John Paul II (PASS, 1996), #5
- ¹⁵⁴ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁵⁵ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁵⁶ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁵⁷ *Laborem exercens* #19
- ¹⁵⁸ *Centesimus annus* #15
- ¹⁵⁹ *Laborem exercens* #18
- ¹⁶⁰ *Laborem exercens* #19
- ¹⁶¹ *Centesimus annus* #40
- ¹⁶² *Letter to Families* ##8–9
- ¹⁶³ *Letter to Families* #6
- ¹⁶⁴ *Letter to Families* #7
- ¹⁶⁵ *Letter to Families* #14
- ¹⁶⁶ *Letter to Families* #13
- ¹⁶⁷ *Letter to Families* #17
- ¹⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, (2005), p. 75.
- ¹⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, (2005), p. 73.
- ¹⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, (2005), p. 75.
- ¹⁷¹ Chappel (2018), chapter 2; John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁷² John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁷³ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #16
- ¹⁷⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #16
- ¹⁷⁸ *Laborem exercens* #10
- ¹⁷⁹ John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (1994), #17
- ¹⁸⁰ *Laborem exercens* #19
- ¹⁸¹ *Centesimus annus* #49
- ¹⁸² See his addresses in 1999, 2002 and 2003.
- ¹⁸³ John Paul II (PASS, 2002), #3; emphases added.
- ¹⁸⁴ John Paul II (PASS, 2002), #3
- ¹⁸⁵ *Centesimus annus* #49
- ¹⁸⁶ *Centesimus annus* #49
- ¹⁸⁷ *Centesimus annus* #49
- ¹⁸⁸ *Centesimus annus* #13
- ¹⁸⁹ John Paul II (PASS, 1994), #6

4: John Paul II

¹⁹⁰ John Paul II (PASS, 2000), #4

¹⁹¹ *Laborem exercens* #20

¹⁹² *Sollicitudo rei socialis* #15

¹⁹³ *Centesimus annus* #15

¹⁹⁴ *Centesimus annus* #15

¹⁹⁵ *Centesimus annus* #45

¹⁹⁶ *Centesimus annus* #16

¹⁹⁷ All quotes in this paragraph are taken from *Evangelium vitae* #88 unless stated otherwise.

¹⁹⁸ *Evangelium vitae* #94

¹⁹⁹ *Centesimus annus* #48

²⁰⁰ Discours du Saint-Pere Jean Paul II (1991), #5

²⁰¹ *Dominum et vivificantem* #10; *Fides et ratio* #80; *Evangelium vitae* #81; *Evangelium vitae* #25; *Ecclesia de eucharistia* #11; *Evangelium vitae* #51, 92; *Fides et ratio* #32.

²⁰² Maritain (1935), p. 46.

5: “The self is not because of need but because of gift”: Rowan Williams

Introduction

“To engage in such a debate about the nature of citizenship is also, and inevitably, to open the door to a deeper debate”, Rowan Williams told the House of Lords on 16 June 2010, a debate that is “about the very nature of how we define the human person”.¹ Although Williams’ focus on human personhood was less pronounced in his archiepiscopacy than was John Paul II’s in his papacy, the connection he drew between it and its contemporary political implications was frequently more explicit.² In his 2010 Isaiah Berlin lecture he spoke about how society needed to “allow consideration of what sort of human character is being formed by its public practices”, evidencing among these the closure of libraries and galleries, “employment regimes that reward patterns of work that undermine family life”, a culture of “unmanageable debt”, scapegoating of refugees, and social policy that cuts public care budgets and centralises and bureaucratises medical and nursing care.³ In short, he was frequently at pains to emphasise the practical and political implications of our, usually submerged, anthropologies.⁴

Within this context, the implications of Christian anthropology were made clear. “I’m more and more persuaded that it’s impossible to have anything resembling an intelligent discussion in the political and social realm without struggling to clarify what we actually believe about human beings,” he remarked to the Welsh Assembly in 2012, in a speech that was perhaps his most explicit archiepiscopal statement on the necessity of the link between (Christian) anthropology and politics.⁵ He repeatedly made this link, and grounded it in specifics, whether that was with regard to economic policy,⁶ the law,⁷ the environment,⁸ human rights,⁹ or, as we shall note below, the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare.

All that noted, however, a repeated and even specific link between Christian anthropology and policy is not the same as a clear one. This is not simply the familiar point about Williams’ dense and difficult prose style. Nor is it simply a consequence of the circumstantial and occasional, rather than systematic, origins of many of his interventions, although this is undeniable.¹⁰ Mike Highton observed in 2011 that much of Williams’

theology “is found in places other than the printed page... [in talks in] particular situations where...he is making connections with specific lives”, and this applies especially so to his more political engagements.¹¹ Moreover, such collections of Williams’ thought that do exist are self-consciously presented as loose and disparate collections. Williams describes his book *On Christian Theology* in its preface as “some kind of collection of scattered pieces”.¹² *Faith in the Public Square*, his collection of archiepiscopal lectures, is not offered as “a compendium of political theology” but only “a series of worked examples”.¹³

Lack of systematisation does not mean lack of coherence. Higton noted that when writing his book on him, he flipped between Williams’ earliest and latest writings and found himself “on familiar territory: the theological vision...was entirely recognisable”.¹⁴ When it comes to the topic of this thesis, one can see this clearly in Williams’ first published work, ‘The Theology of Personhood: A Study of the Thought of Christos Yannaras’, published in *Sobornost* in 1972, in which he remarked that “personhood is not a part of human nature, it defines natures, it is the ‘ontological starting-point’ for understanding nature... existence can only be perceived *in persons*”, a sentiment instantly identifiable with his later work.¹⁵

This combination of a deeply thought-through and coherent, but unsystematic approach could account for Jonathan Chaplin’s justifiable comment that “the link between [Williams’] rich vision of the embodied relational person and his account of plural social institutions [is] somewhat vague.”¹⁶ However, it is also important to recognise that this lack of clarity is more intentional than this judgement might indicate, reflecting Williams’ deliberate and theologically-grounded determination to maintain a degree of openness in all his pronouncements.

This is a repeated theme in Williams’ writing, with roots in his understanding of language, of creation, of revelation, of theology, and of Anglicanism. At one point in his book on Dostoyevsky, written on sabbatical while at Canterbury, Williams quotes Dostoyevsky (quoting Tyuchev) to the effect that “a thought once uttered is a lie”.¹⁷ It is a sentiment that could be appropriated for Williams himself. “When you try to tidy up an unsystematised speech, you are likely to lose a great deal”, as he writes in the prologue to *On Christian Theology*.¹⁸

Dostoyevsky’s novels understand and depict the diabolical “as that which seeks to end history and speech”,¹⁹ his narratives attempting to show “what divine creation might be like”, namely “by creating a world in which the unexpected and unscripted is continually

unfolding, in which there is no imposed last word.”²⁰ In effect, in Williams own words, “there is nothing sayable that cannot be answered or continued or qualified in some way or another”.²¹

As with the nature of language and creation, so with revelation and the business of theology. “Revelation decisively advances or extends debate [and therefore] extends rather than limits the range of ambiguity and conflict in language,” he wrote in his essay ‘Trinity and Revelation’.²² “It poses fresh questions rather than answering old ones.” Theology is, or should be, a *conversation*, marked by the “two essential features” of conversation, namely the “recognition of an ‘unfinished’ quality in what has been said on either side, and the possibility of correction.”²³ “What we know, if we claim to be Christians,” he wrote in ‘Trinity and Pluralism’ “is as much as anything a set of negotiations.”²⁴

It is also, by Williams reckoning, a particular characteristic of Anglicanism. “Theological language”, he wrote in his volume of essays *Anglican Identities*, “is a difficult, always incomplete, corruptible, but unavoidable enterprise”, no more so than with the “inventor of that distinctive Anglican mood ... [of] ‘contemplative pragmatism’”, Richard Hooker.²⁵ This Anglican “mood”, according to Williams, “embraces a fair degree of clarity about the final goal of human beings”, but allows room for “a good deal of reticence as to how this ought to work itself out”, alongside a “scepticism as to claims that we have found comprehensive formulations.” The result, he writes in the Introduction to that volume is “a theologically informed and spiritually sustained *patience*” in which Anglican theologians “do not expect human words to solve their problems rapidly” – or, one is tempted to add, at all.²⁶

This approach generates a certain apophatic style in his political work, in which, for all his rich and coherent (if unsystematised) reflection on the implications of Christian anthropology for politics and society, Williams is more comfortable naming what is not rather than what is, talking about the ideologies, systems and cultures that a Christian anthropology would proscribe than those it might prescribe. Thus, for example, he began his speech to the Welsh assembly saying “Rather than saying what community is, I’m going to begin by saying what community isn’t, and see where we get to with that.”²⁷

So it is that, for carefully considered reasons, Williams’ rich, broad, nuanced, and subtle reflections on Christian anthropology, and his clear and repeated insistence on their significant, specific and meaningful implications for politics, economics, law, and welfare,

do not result in anything approaching an agenda for change. Rather, they provide the plumb line against which inadequate social constructions can be measured and corrected, in such a way as generates unfinished but truer social and political institutions.

This chapter, like preceding ones, is structured between an analysis of Williams' anthropology and its consequences for his understanding of the (welfare) state. It draws out those aspects of personhood that Williams most clearly shares with the other figures in this thesis, such as createdness, responsibility and the final orientation to 'gift', but it supplements them with several elements that are distinctive to Williams' anthropology, such as the emphasis on the omnipresence of communication within creation (as opposed to simply being a facet of human sociality or relationality), and the significance of mystery and imagination to personhood. Building on this multi-dimensional theological anthropology (Williams being the only figure here discussed explicitly to use the concept of multi-dimensionality), the chapter then points to what this means for his ideas of interactive pluralism, his conviction that the state needs to act as a morally 'thick' broker within the community of communities over which it presides, and the implications this has for the provision of welfare.

Anthropology

Williams' anthropological discussions are marked by the features mentioned above, tending towards the apophatic and the unsystemised.

His concept of the human person (a word to which we shall turn) is often defined against those contemporarily popular concepts – the soul, the self, the individual – that he sees as limited and problematic articulations of what it is to be human. Human essence is not captured by talking of the 'soul', in the sense of early modern philosophy, "an immaterial individual substance".²⁸ "Modern ethics and theology alike have been haunted by a presence usually called the authentic self," he wrote in his essays on 'Interiority and Epiphany', an agent "whose motivation is transparent, devoid of self-deception and of socially-conditioned role playing".²⁹ This, he insists, is an "intellectually shaky and... morally problematic" fiction, the self not being a core of authenticity that we reveal "by peeling away layers" but instead "an integrity one struggles to bring into existence."³⁰ "I have avoided speaking of the human *individual*", he said in his William Temple lecture "because doing so fails to recognise how the human life is "thoroughly embedded in corporate practices and common life."³¹

The self and the individual are unhelpfully “one-dimensional” conceptualisations, to pick up a metaphor he deploys in his 1972 essay on Christos Yannaras and to which he returns in his later writings. “Community...assumes that the ‘other’ for whom you’re taking responsibility is a three-dimensional person”, he told the Welsh Assembly in 2012.³²

“Communities of conviction” should actively engage in political life, he said in a lecture in Westminster Abbey in 2008, “simply so that we should go on having three-dimensional persons in public life.”³³ That this is more than a conventional metaphor is captured in his lecture to the TUC in 2009, in which he spells out the need to attend to, seek and protect a “‘three-dimensional’ humanity” that is centred on family and imagination and “mutual sympathy” in society.³⁴

A slightly different scheme is sketched out in his James Gregory Lecture in 2015. Here, contending against reductive and abstracted understandings of consciousness, which in their own way are as problematically-attenuated as concepts of the self or the individual, he advocates an understanding of consciousness that is located, relational, narrative, and “bound up with language”.³⁵

These different classifications in their own ways highlight themes that have been consistently (if not systematically) present in Williams’ anthropology, and while one must always recognise Williams’ reluctance to close down discussion through definition or systematisation, I will appropriate them to outline three key “dimensions” to Williams’ anthropology. Prior to doing so, however, I want to explore briefly how these dimensions are not restricted to Williams’ concept of the human but rooted in, and reflective of, his wider understanding of creation.

Creation

That the human is created, in the sense of being a material element within the material created order, is a familiar theme in Williams’ writing. “The body is the organ of the soul’s meaning,” he said in a lecture on human rights to the LSE, “the medium in which the conscious subject communicates.”³⁶ “We relate to one another as bodies,” he observed in the 2012 Theos lecture.³⁷ Consciousness is “a matter of charting lines of relation with *other material agents*”, he said in 2015.³⁸

Similarly, the understanding that humans are created in the sense of being intrinsically dependent on other (material) agents and situations is a familiar and long-standing concern. To be human is “to be a creature, a part of the world, a moment in a pattern,

dependent on others, dependent on ourselves”, he wrote in *The Truce of God* in 1983.³⁹

“Finite being... is marked by dependence: to exist as a discrete subject of predication is to depend,” he said in *The Edge of Words* thirty years later.⁴⁰

It is important, however, to root this materiality and dependency in Williams’ wider discussions on creation in order to show what human materiality and dependency mean to him, and, in particular to clean up a persistent “philosophical myth” that he names in *The Edge of Words*, namely the “habit of opposing purely active subject to passive object”. Rather than dividing the world into stuff that has and deals with meaning (agents like our selves) and stuff that doesn’t (objects and processes in the world), thereby viewing consciousness as “a somewhat embarrassing excrescence on the surface of rational material processes”, Williams’ insists that “material objects and the material world as such are always ‘saturated’ with the workings of the mind” and “any and every *event* in the world is potentially a communication of infinite intelligence.”⁴¹ In Williams’ view, “matter itself” is invariably and necessarily communicative”, rather than being passively “moulded by our minds into intelligible structure.”⁴² Creation is not a dead stage on which humans play, but itself communicative of precisely the same divine nature that finds its clearest manifestation in the species in which God was incarnated.

Thus, “creation is itself an act of *communication*, a form of language”, an idea that to which, he points out, Eastern Christian thought is especially sensitive.⁴³ It is known by God before it is by any human, that “what I see is already ‘seen’ by, already in relation to, some reality immeasurably different from the self I know myself”, and therefore there is an essential unknowableness, or mystery to it.⁴⁴

Beyond creation’s innate communicativeness and its otherness, it is also marked by being gift. Understanding God “as trinity, intrinsic self-love and self-gift”, establishes that creation “while not ‘needed’ by God, is wholly in accord with the divine being as *being-for-another*”.⁴⁵ God is the one who “eternally... generates what is other”. There is in his “heart...what you might call the energy of difference, an outpouring of life into *otherness*”. Creation is “an act of divine *self-giving*, the bestowing of God’s activity in and through what is not God”.⁴⁶

Thus, the idea of understanding humans as created is not simply a way of emphasising their irreducible materiality and dependency. By embedding that understanding within Williams’ wider understanding of creation (and of God), he subverts familiar assumptions

pertaining to materiality and dependency – that both are somehow inert or wholly reliant – and introduces concepts of *communication*, *mystery* and *self-gift* that are central to his vision of human personhood. I will structure my following discussion of Williams’ anthropology on these three ideas, remaining conscious that this is not a cost-free tidying-up of his thought, and risks underemphasising other important concepts in his anthropology, such as temporality, emergence, and imagination. Accordingly, I will make wider reference to such concepts in the discussion.

Communication

As noted, Williams’ understanding of creation is inherently communicative. “The more we reflect on speech and its claims to represent the environment”, he wrote in the introduction to *The Edge of Words*, “the more our universe looks like a network of communication.”⁴⁷

It is important to understand communication here in its widest sense, not simply speech. Because the created order is not passive, inert matter but saturated with communicative activity of God, all things, and in particular all agents, are “capable of ‘speaking’ and bestowing something of the creator.”⁴⁸ Thus, the human body itself “*speaks*”, is “a language”, “receiv[ing] and digest[ing] communication”,⁴⁹ participating in the on-going conversation that is intrinsic to the material, created world.

This has implications for human personhood and community, but before that, the foundational nature of communication says something about the core of human identity, human dignity, and rights. Although Williams unequivocally rejects the idea of any irreducible isolated core to human identity, he nevertheless repeatedly emphasises how the human person is addressed by God before he or she is addressed by, or addresses, anyone or anything else.⁵⁰ In the light of that, others have a “standing before God”, which is “invulnerable to the success or failure of any other relationship or any situation in the contingent world.” Here resides the dignity I am mandated to respect.⁵¹

This is a foundation for Williams’ understanding of human rights and also human community.⁵² Our environment is “irreducibly charged with intelligibility,” in such a way so that “we are oriented to picking up and decoding intelligible messages.”⁵³ Indeed, that orientation is essential as, in much the same way as I am spoken into existence by God’s word, we develop into persons through communication. “We speak because we are spoken to and learn to become partakers in human conversation by being invited into a flow of

verbal life that has already begun.”⁵⁴ Language – or, more broadly, communication – is an inherently relational practice. “It is simply and literally impossible for us to learn and use language without acknowledging dependence.”⁵⁵

This is an inherently messy and agonistic process. As he says in his essay ‘Interiority and Epiphany’, “the exchanges of conversation and negotiation *are* the essence of what is going on” rather than some “unsatisfactory translations of a more fundamental script.”⁵⁶ On the one hand, such negotiation forces us, in the face of the existence of the other, to abandon our “illusions of control, [our] passion for ‘scripting’ the language used around me”. On the other, if that encounter with the other becomes too contentious, it risks apprehending the other “as a threat or a rival”.⁵⁷

Communication, then, is fraught with challenges. God may not “emerge” into personhood because he “is personal”, as Williams intimated in his early review of Yannaras, but human personhood is more fragile and emergent.⁵⁸ This introduces an important sub-theme in Williams’ anthropology, namely the temporal and developmental nature of human personhood.

Selves are not timeless any more than they are immaterial. Rather, as he says in *Lost Icons*, “the self lives and moves in, only in, acts of telling.”⁵⁹ This communication is sequential, ‘selfhood’ existing in time. “To know how to be human...requires us to take very seriously the fact that we are historical beings, shaped by our past... we are never in a state of pure rationality.”⁶⁰ This has particularly important implications for our contemporary consumer culture with its adulation of the unencumbered, uncoerced and eternally unaffected self. “The controlled self, making its dispositions in a vacuum of supposed consumer freedom and determining the clothing in which it will appear, is a fiction.”⁶¹

The unattached, atemporal, consumerised self is a fiction, and a destructive one at that. True persons develop and learn, an emphasis that is part and parcel of Williams’ focus on communication, and brings to the fore the seminal point that persons are relationally-constituted. It is by communicating with others in time, and learning from that messy and always open-ended process of communication, we develop our personhood.

Thus, Williams asserts that true self-knowledge lies not in “lonely introspection” but by “meditating on the relations in which we already stand”, relations that we did not choose.⁶² The “common enterprise of humanity” is something that “is being constantly learned”.⁶³ A

person is “that kind of reality, the point at which relationships intersect, where a difference may be made and new relations created”.⁶⁴

This relationality is what “*human beings are made for...* where the deepest springs of our humanity are to be found.”⁶⁵ Moreover, it is rooted in the belief that “God’s own self is already a pattern of loving relationship: the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit”.⁶⁶ It is central to the Christian narrative, whereby Christians are engaged “in Christ, in *constructing* each other’s humanity”.⁶⁷ And it has serious social and political implications as it means, firstly, there cannot be “a human good for one person or group that necessarily excludes the good of another person or group”⁶⁸ but also that people must learn not through “being lectured” or absorbing universal principles but “by growing up in dependable communities, in families, in local communities and associations where they know they’re taken seriously.”⁶⁹

Mystery (and imagination)

Williams’ personalism is grounded in the theology of Vladimir Lossky, on whom he wrote his doctoral thesis, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition more broadly.⁷⁰ The same influence is visible in the attention Williams pays to the fundamental mystery and unknowability of the human person. Lossky, he said in his 2012 Theos lecture, is arguing for an essential mysteriousness about the notion of the person in the human world, an essential mysteriousness that one can’t simply deal with by listing it in a number of things that are true about us.”⁷¹

This is implicit in his engagement with communication and relationality outlined above. If the person is spoken to and known by God prior to any human or earthly actions, that means that there is something of that person that is always prior and inaccessible to other persons. “Whenever I face another human being, I face a mystery” he said in a lecture on ‘Public Religion and the Common Good’ in 2007. No-one, no matter how “beloved”, can ever be completely “‘captured’, even in decades of relationship.”⁷²

The fact that we are, finally, “not transparent” to one another, and that my personhood is forged by “converse and exchange” with others, also implies that my own personhood is a mystery, ultimately hidden from me, through the process of being formed through communicative interaction with “opaque” others.⁷³ This generates another reason for the openness that saturates Williams’ theology as he says that this should “enjoin a consistent scepticism about claims to have arrived at a final transparency to myself.”⁷⁴

It is important to stress that such mystery and openness are not shortcomings or problems to be overcome in Williams' anthropology but constitutive and creative elements. To be human is to be unknowable, unfinished, and endlessly generative. It is, in short, to be creative and imaginative.

As with Williams' emphasis on communication, this stress on creativity is explicitly rooted in the nature of God. "Creativity in the created world becomes then a mirror of God's nature" he said in a lecture on 'Creation, Creativity and Creatureliness'.⁷⁵ In the light of that, human creativity "is most fully and freely expressed as humans when we, as artists, stand back and let be", that "letting be" being, in fact, a "hugely laborious business".

The danger with this articulation is that it might give the impression that creativity is the task of artists, or that creativity and the imaginative life is something that should or could be limited to a particular area of human society, say the creative industry. This is emphatically not Williams' view, as he goes on to say in the same lecture: "campaigning about debt or fair trade is creative, it is an exercise of what our humanity is called to". Moreover, the fact that he made this point explicitly in an address to the Trades Union Conference underlines the seminally important role that human creativity plays on 'ordinary life'.⁷⁶

This emphasis on the essential creativity of human nature is further underlined by the deployment of one Williams' most characteristic words, 'imagination', together with its suffixes (usually 'social' or 'moral') or its cognates (usually 'imaginative').

Given Williams' major interest in literature and the arts there is an obvious forum here for his recognition of the centrality of the human imagination.⁷⁷ Art, he wrote in a lecture on Maritain, is foundational in maintaining the openness and mystery of creation. It challenges "the finality of appearance...not in order to destroy but to ground, amplify, fulfil."⁷⁸ George Bell was to be lauded for, among other things, his "passionate optimism about the possible convergence of the Christian faith with the artist's imagination".⁷⁹ More broadly, as he remarked in his book on Dostoyevsky, no system of "perceiving and receiving the world can fail to depend upon imagination."⁸⁰

As with creativity, imagination is emphatically not a human characteristic limited to 'imaginative' industries but intrinsic to the good – and collective good – all human persons, including in their quite specific social, economic and political contexts. Williams places the entire cultural analysis in his book *Lost Icons* on how contemporary society has lost

“clusters of convention and imagination...of possible lives or modes of life”, the loss of these being, he contends, the consequence of a “single, focal area of lost imagination”, which he calls the soul.⁸¹

Accordingly, the health of concrete practices of political and economic life suffer, depending as they do on their recognition and nurturing of the imagination that is central to the human person. Thus, he told a Q&A on the subject in Holy Week 2008 that politics could not survive without “moral energy and imagination” generated by faith (or, more precisely, “faith of one sort or another”).⁸² The British labour movement, he told the TUC, had an honourable record in its commitment to “humane values, to humane relationships and intelligence and imagination.”⁸³ The work of developing credit unions, he repeatedly remarked at the opening of the Waltham Forest one in 2004, was one of imagination.⁸⁴

Gift (and responsibility)

The third aspect of Williams’ anthropology that I have chosen to highlight – the person as gift – is, of course, closely linked with the previous two. The very nature of communication, through which the person is formed, involves gift and receipt of self and other. Similarly, “God’s self-forgetting in creation” is the foundation and model for any human act of creation: “the creative artist is doing a kenotic job.”⁸⁵ That noted, it is worth drawing out Williams’ ideas on gift separately, partly because they comprise a substantial amount of his anthropology and partly because they link clearly and explicitly into the foundations of his political anthropology.

The concept of gift is rooted in Williams’ idea of God. “The life of the infinite is eternally relation and gift,” he wrote in his 2018 book on Christology, “the endlessness of a mutual outpouring of life and bliss”.⁸⁶ Understanding divine wisdom is impossible without “understanding of divine self-giving... self-surrender”.⁸⁷ The events of Jesus’ life should be “grasped as the radical self-dispossession of God.”⁸⁸ The person is found ultimately in the supreme and total act of self-giving of the cross.

Creation is to be understood in the same light, “an act of divine self-giving, the bestowing of God’s activity in and through what is not God.”⁸⁹ This understanding of creation as gift reflects and informs Williams’ ideas concerning the natural communicativeness of the material, and finds a particularly penetrating expression in the Eucharist, which “hints” at the “paradox” that “material things carry their fullest for human minds and the bodies...when they are the medium of *gift*.”⁹⁰ Although Williams only very rarely makes

references to John Paul II, this is a sentiment with direct parallel in the pope's description of the Eucharist as "*the gift par excellence... of [Christ] himself, of his person in his sacred humanity,*" in *Ecclesia et Eucharistia*.⁹¹

And naturally – not least because "there is a truth about human beings [that] God has revealed...in Jesus Christ and revealed himself in that action" – this concept of God, wisdom, Christ, and creation as gift lies at the heart of human dignity, personality and self.⁹² "Human dignity," Williams remarked, "is not simply about what is owed to us and what is given to us." Moreover, "it's also about what each has to give."⁹³ Everyone is (and should be) able "to give to others, to have the dignity of being a giver, being important to someone else." Human personality is "above all, committed to receiving and giving."⁹⁴ "The self is," he says in *Lost Icons*, "not because of need but because of gift."⁹⁵

It is worth engaging in a brief parenthesis here on the topic of agency, partly because it was a significant aspect of John Paul II's anthropology; partly because it plays a significant role in popular and political debates about welfare, particularly among those on the political right; and partly because Williams does look seriously at the question of agency, doing so in the context of locating human identity, dignity and personality in the concept of gift.

Few would put Williams on the right of the political spectrum, so it is telling that, when he does discuss agency, he has a strong view on the topic. Religious faith, he says in his William Temple lecture, "assumes that human fulfilment is something that an agent, a human subject, owns."⁹⁶ Such fulfilment is "connected with" the choices people make and the lives they live, and especially is predicated on *not* having one's life "defined for you by the power or agency of someone else." Fulfilment cannot be defined by others, still less be seen as "a commodity" provided by them. What matters, he told the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in 2004, is "acquiring a sense that you have made yourself responsible for how you see the world... You have found a place to stand and have become the subject of your moral life."⁹⁷ In this light, in a sentiment with obvious relevance to our topic, he says that "welfare is not about someone else's responsibility to make me happy [but] is about releasing the self for well-being, to shape and discover that well-being with other selves and other agents."⁹⁸

This might conceivably be heard as a Thatcherite view, and it is instructive that in a House of Lords debate in 2008 he referenced 2 Thessalonians, which Margaret Thatcher famously quoted in her speech to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 1988. In the

debate, Williams claims that Christian morality was about the “equipping of people for the exercise of their human dignity as citizens”, citing Paul’s Thessalonian commendation of generosity to the poorest and “responsibility on the part of those who can work to do so and to support themselves and their families.” The exercise of such agency, such responsibility, is critical to personal dignity and common welfare. “Giving to others is part of a process that enables those others to grow in their own dignity and to become givers in their turn.”⁹⁹

Where this reading does diverge from the familiar individualistic or Thatcherite one, is that it runs in strict parallel to Williams’ clear emphasis on human dependency. As noted, to be human it to be known, addressed and loved by God prior to exercising any agency, and to be born into webs of communication and relationship that form one’s personhood, just as much as we form that of others. It is only in this context, that the kind of agency and responsibility of which Williams’ speaks in the William Temple Lecture and the 2008 House of Lords debate makes sense. As he wrote in an essay ‘On Being Creatures’ a number of years earlier, our spiritual health demands “a twofold honesty”, incorporating on the one hand, a recognition of “the inevitability of dependence (since we are *not* self-regulating systems)” and on the other a recognition of “the fundamental need to imagine oneself, nonetheless, as a true agent, not confined by dependence.”¹⁰⁰ Autonomy is not, he says, “the self’s ability to select and freely execute its goals”, but rather the skill of “knowing whose aid and companionship you need and the freedom to depend on that.”¹⁰¹

The resulting combination – of dependence and agency; of receiving and giving gifts – should generate a mutuality that is the foundation of true social wellbeing. Human community, he writes in his book on Christology, is “most fully realized in the unconditional mutuality which is represented by the language of organic interdependence.”¹⁰² Such mutuality is, naturally, central to Williams’ understanding of the church and what it shows society. It is telling that his reference to citizenship in the House of Lords debate quoted above, is followed by the parenthesis “both of their own societies and of the City of God”; for Williams there is no wholesale break between the kind of ethic to which church and society should aspire. A “theological approach” to community – evidenced in “the community of the Hebrew scriptures living under law”, or the Pauline community in which “we work as a body in which there is nothing good for one part that isn’t good for the whole and nothing bad for one part that is not bad for the whole” – is one

in which “we all have something we are called upon to contribute to the flourishing of an organic whole.”¹⁰³

This is perhaps one of the commonest sentiments in Williams’ speeches on human society. Sometimes, the sentiment is framed with specific reference to the church. “The relation of each to the Master is such that each is given some unique contribution to the common life, so that no one member of the community is able fully to realise their calling and their possibilities without every other.”¹⁰⁴ “The good of the other is eventually intrinsic to the good of oneself”, as he says in an essay on William Tyndale.¹⁰⁵ A good ‘society’ – whether constituted by its conscious adherence to God, or by geography, language, history, ethnicity, or some other created criterion – is one that is drawn to the idea of self-giving, whereby every person seeks their own good by giving of themselves and pursuing the good of the other, in imitation of God’s own inherent self-giving.¹⁰⁶

Here, then, we have a clear link between Williams’ anthropology and his political thought, the idea that the human person is fulfilled in self-giving, and that properly understood this informs the contours of society. The world of voluntary and community organisation should nurture “a culture of self-respect”, in which people “come to believe that they are capable of making a difference,” he told the NCVO.¹⁰⁷ Welfare is not about someone else’s responsibility to make me happy, he told the William Temple Foundation, but is rather about “releasing the self for well-being, to shape and discover that well-being with other selves and other agents.”¹⁰⁸

Political Implications

This account of Rowan Williams’ anthropology is, as caveated above, vulnerable to the accusation that it is overly schematised, drawn as it is not only from Williams’ extensive and largely occasional corpus of speeches and essays that touch on the topic, but also from his repeated antipathy to finality or closure in any intellectual endeavour, as well as the apophatic register with which he is clearly comfortable. His understanding of human nature as *essentially* (though the word must be used with caution) communicative, creative, and kenotic is, I argue, defensible; but his understanding of human nature as essentially *not* self-creative,¹⁰⁹ self-interested,¹¹⁰ self-possessive,¹¹¹ relativist,¹¹² grounded ultimately in rights¹¹³ and so forth is clearer still. What the human person is *not* is more easily stated than what s/he is.¹¹⁴

Much the same applies to his resulting political theology: although it is possible to edge towards his vision for the state and for the provision of welfare, to do so in a way that is true to Williams' own theological method would involve first outlining what political visions or systems his anthropology *precludes*.

Again at the risk of over systematisation, there are three political approaches to the state that Williams sees as indefensible given the nature of the human and the human good he proposes which can be labelled, without too much inaccuracy, Fabianism, Thatcherism and managerialism.

The first (although the order is arbitrary) is a certain kind of left-wing politics, Williams' critique of which is at odds with popular assumptions of his own political home. Given the non-negotiable importance of people exercising agency, generosity and creativity in such a way as affirms and develops their personhood, there are real perils in the kind of state that understands itself as the *solution* to people's needs, the idea that "all problems are to be solved top down from the State."¹¹⁵ There are obvious enemies here, such as those "utopian" programmes of "justice and reconciliation" that are "consistently vulnerable to [their] own failure to transform more than the interpersonal".¹¹⁶ The experience of state socialism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, he told the NCVO in 2014, made it painfully obvious "that motivation for co-operative work cannot be imposed at a level that is remote from people's actual working lives and personal concerns."¹¹⁷ Such approaches are inconsistent with fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, not only contravening its anthropology but also its "'eschatological reserve' about excessive political claims."¹¹⁸

That acknowledged, there are other subtler forms of state activity that are also problematic. The most prominent among these for Williams is the Fabian socialism that features with notable frequency in his speeches and clearly serves as a British model of how forms of politics that pay insufficient attention to human creative agency are problematic. More importantly (for our purposes), Fabianism is repeatedly placed in opposition to traditions of politics (usually but not always Labour politics) that offer an alternative and more constructive approach that pays closer attention to the true contours of human nature, and bring us closer to Williams' vision for the welfare state.

Speaking to the William Temple Foundation he interpreted the history of British socialism in the twentieth century as a victory of the Webbs and over William Morris; Sydney and Beatrice Webb's model "of highly controlled social provision" winning over Morris'

“anarcho-syndicalism” with its greater concern for “agency” and “creativity”.¹¹⁹ More forcefully still, he told the Welsh Assembly that there is a strand British left thinking “which has been almost obsessional about state solutions,” solutions that have “sat rather uncomfortably with the localist cooperative element in British socialism” that always paid much more attention to the need for immediate, participation and moral agency.¹²⁰

In actual fact, Williams noted in his Big Society lecture, the Fabian vision didn’t wholly win out. It did, however, offer “top-down solutions” that ultimately proved irresistible to people across the political spectrum, its commitment to “central planning” apparently “more effective than anything”.¹²¹ One of Williams’ repeated messages in his speeches on this topic centres on the need to recapture this alternative vision. “We still need a robust defence of the non-Fabian, the pluralist, vision of what a just society might be,” he told the William Temple Foundation.¹²² “We all need to grow out of the sort of early Fabian/ Sidney Webb idea that government is always the prime provider of social goods, whether you like it or not.”¹²³ This “defence” or “growing out of” has important resources and models on which to draw, both historical – Lord Acton, F.W. Maitland, John Neville Figgis and Harold Laski – and contemporary – Philip Blond and Maurice Glasman – to which we shall turn later. For now, however, we can see in Williams’ treatment of Fabianism a line over which his anthropology will not allow his politics to cross. A proper understanding of human nature will mean that the state listens “to the voices of moral vision that spring from communities that do not depend on the state itself for their integrity and meaning”, something that Fabian socialism patently failed to do.¹²⁴

The second political approach judged inconsistent with Williams’ anthropology might be labelled neo-liberalism or Thatcherism, although these are labels Williams eschews for obvious reasons. In reality, at least in Williams’ writings, this position comprised a cluster of approaches rather than a single, neat ideology. There is the “poisonous distortion” of unalloyed individualism, the idea that “there is no such thing as society... [but only] individuals all pursuing their own goals”, with government limited to “prevent[ing] the worst conflicts that might arise out of that.”¹²⁵ There is the doctrine of what Williams’ calls “economism”, the notion that “economic solutions can be narrowly defined in terms of measurable profit and loss, bracketing out issues of a shared wellbeing.”¹²⁶ While there are practical objections aplenty to the utilitarianism that underlies this approach, it is primarily the fact that economism envisages humans as “essentially calculating machines” to which Williams objects. There is also the kind of moralism that sometimes attends this

political programme, the “nostalgia for ‘values’” that “echoes the individualistic and facile language of moral retrenchment”, and is really little more than political “window dressing.”¹²⁷

The third political approach that Williams’ anthropology judges unacceptable again lacks an obvious label, not so much because Williams is too canny to give it one as because it remained politically fresh in his time at Canterbury, and had yet to coalesce into a coherent agenda (or because, by some reckonings, was too opportunistic ever to do so). It combined a Fabian conviction that the state was the proper vehicle to solve society’s problems with the more liberal emphasis inherent in Thatcherism, thereby generating a kind of managerialism and consumer politics – a kind of Blairite ‘Third Way’, although again this is too loaded and contemporary a political identity for Williams to use.¹²⁸

In his early archiepiscopal ‘Richard Dimbleby lecture’, Williams spoke directly to this concern, saying that the “apparently simple and attractive picture of a more direct relation between individuals and government”, whereby citizens becomes consumers whose aggregate demands government is mandated to respect and deliver through some unwritten contract, “is not the ideal of democratic life but a parody of it.”¹²⁹ The ends are those of Fabianism, the means those of Thatcherism. Government has the responsibility and ability to solve problems but the problems that need to be fixed are identified and advocated by public opinion, not by central command. “Political and social ‘goods’ are seen more and more as fixed objects of aspiration, as commodities marketed by the national executive”. Voting is a form of consumer pressure. “The individual political subject, endowed with rights” is pitted against the state, “endowed with the monopoly of legitimate power.” Instead of the politicizing of consumption, “not at all a bad idea” by Williams’ reckoning, what we ultimately get is the consumerization of politics, “not at all a good idea.”¹³⁰

This commodification of politics “seeks to smooth everything out into lumps of material on which price tags are affixed”, generating an irredeemably “managerial and functional approach” to our common life.¹³¹ It (inadvertently) creates a competitive environment for social goods. Williams remarked in a speech on William Tyndale (of all people) in a lecture delivered before his time at Canterbury, that the kind of “universalist ideal of justice”, which substitutes “a community of abstract individuals” for the messy reality of real people and the multiple loyalties and associations, leads “precisely [to] the rights-obsessed society

of our own age, in which each individual arrives in the social process equipped with a variety of enforceable claims”, leaving social life “a constant adjustment of rival interests.”¹³²

This crept into and has become a particular blight on the politics of welfare, as Williams observed in his William Temple lecture. In the 1980s, he explained, in response to the complaints about dependency and “welfarism”, “some people seemed to think that the alternative was to give people power and initiative through the market, to make them independent agents as purchasers.”¹³³ They became, in effect, “purchasing agent[s]”, no longer just passive recipients. The inadequacy of this, he reasons, is obvious, and is anthropological, in as far as, while it tries to respect people’s agency, it shrinks that agency “to one particular mode”. The person becomes the purchaser, a consumer, thereby wholly ignoring the seminal importance of person as giver.

As it happens, the ramifications of this approach on politics as a whole extends beyond problematic models of welfare provision or rights-claiming to the very foundations of politics itself. In his 2001 essay ‘Beyond Liberalism’, Williams warned that we seem to be losing sight “of what the very idea of government is about”. The mundane, time-refined and concrete “processes and protocols” of government were becoming “increasingly overshadowed” by unrealistic public expectations, the “instantaneous button-pressing” model of (pseudo-)democracy of which he spoke in his Dimbleby lecture the following year, in which the “ideal” – and perhaps the only legitimate – model for democracy is the referendum, which itself generates enormous discord while settling little that really matters.¹³⁴ Fifteen years later, in a review of John Milbank and Adrian Pabst’s book *The Politics of Virtue*, published in the wake of the Brexit campaign and referendum, he talked again about “the resurgence of a ‘plebiscite’ ideal of democracy, the fantasy of politics as the direct expression of unmediated demands [and] all the risks of majoritarian tyranny that go with it” – this time able to point of live and potent examples.¹³⁵

‘Pluralism’ and ‘Communitarianism’

If Fabianism, Thatcherism and managerialism – for want of better labels – are proscribed as state models by Williams’ anthropology, what (if anything) is prescribed? Williams is disinclined to pin his political theology colours to any ‘ism’ for reasons already discussed, and so we must answer this question with the appropriate caution. Thus, while the short answer orients us away from these three models towards pluralism and communitarianism, the longer one insists that although Williams gravitates in the direction of both of these

political concepts, he arrives as neither, critiquing and self-consciously distancing himself from both. Thus, while it might be reasonable to call Williams' position one of communitarian pluralism, it would not be reasonable to do so without attending to his reservations with both those terms. We will look at each in turn, drawing out those aspects that Williams affirms and questions.

It is the pluralist political theorists of whom Williams writes most frequently and positively. Supreme among these is John Neville Figgis, so influential on Temple, whom Williams commends in his early essay 'Liberation Theology and the Anglican Tradition'.¹³⁶ Williams credits Figgis with mainstreaming the phrase (and thereby the idea) of society being a "community of communities", in the early 20th century.¹³⁷ His work offers a commendable model of "how the Church should be seeking to shape public opinion."¹³⁸ Along with the work of others – Williams mentions Harold Laski and David Nicholls – Figgis popularised the idea of the state as "a particular cluster of smaller political communities negotiating with each other under the umbrella of a system of arbitration recognised by all."¹³⁹

It is important to be clear of what Williams' understands pluralism to be, if we are also to clear on how he finesses the term. He draws out two distinct meanings of pluralism in the political context.¹⁴⁰ The first is Figgis and Laski's idea that the state is not "the all-powerful source of legitimate community life and action" but "the structure needed to organise and mediate within a 'community of communities'", coordinating but not authorising the "plurality of very diverse groups and associations of civil society, ranging from trade unions and universities to religious bodies."¹⁴¹

The second form of political pluralism is deeper-rooted, in the sense that there is "a genuine plurality of human goods... [that] are not all compatible in any given situation". This pluralism is agonistic at the deepest level, rejecting an idea "that there is some ideal condition in which all genuine human moral goals are realised harmoniously" in favour of an essentially tragic conception of reality, in which "doing the right thing may" – surely will? – "involve the sacrifice of one desired good for the sake of another". Given this deep, ineradicable and incommensurable diversity of goods, the "most realistic" political aspiration is for a liberal state that does not seek to advance by legislation a programme for this or that specific vision of human improvement or self-realisation."¹⁴²

These two understandings of pluralism distinguished, it is worth stressing that Williams has palpable reservations with the second – deep, ideological – pluralism associated with Isaiah Berlin. For all the respect he pays his subject in his 2010 Isaiah Berlin lecture, refraining from criticising him too directly, Williams clearly does not (and cannot) agree with his understanding of deep pluralism. In his lecture of the same year, ‘The Finality of Christ in a pluralist world’, Williams answers this question – “[do] we believe there is something that is true in, and for, all human beings. Or do human beings have different needs and different destinies?” – with a straightforward Christocentric answer:

“There is a truth about human beings. God has revealed it in Jesus Christ and revealed himself in that action... to affirm the uniqueness and the finality of Jesus Christ is actually to affirm something about the universal reconcilability of human beings: the possibility of a universal fellowship.”¹⁴³

In this way, Berlin’s deep and incommensurable pluralism is untenable for anyone who holds to the uniqueness and finality of Christ.

Beyond this, however, I would suggest that there is a second reason for Williams’ distancing himself from Berlin’s pluralism that is germane to the question of the link between his anthropology and political thought. Given its emphasis on the need for openness, Berlin’s underlying anthropology is itself – perhaps paradoxically – too *closed* a doctrine for Williams, stating with unjustified finality that there are deep and incommensurable differences between human goods. As we noted when discussing Williams’ anthropology, his own commitment to openness, on-going dialogue and the endless potential made possible by the nature of creation and communication, mean that to arrive at a *conclusion* of deep and unbridgeable human plurality is itself an illegitimately final statement. While he would no doubt recognise the fact of deep difference underlying Berlin’s pluralism (and thereby the attendant need for political structures and processes that respected that pluralism), he would cavil at its finality.

These reservations with deep, ideological pluralism stand in contrast to his rather more positive understanding of associational pluralism, and his repeated affirmation of Figgis’ ‘community of communities’. That recognised, this second objection to Berlin’s pluralism, i.e. that of undue finality, also informs his engagement with Figgis’ associational pluralism. The quite proper recognition of a society “in which a number of interlocking, intersecting communities...of interest, concern and intention, build up the actual density of social life”

can, in Williams vision, easily balkanise, resulting in the “juxtaposing mutuality of non-communicating groups.”¹⁴⁴ Alternatively, along similar if less overtly antagonistic lines, it can degenerate into what Williams calls “static pluralism”, in which different group identities ossify and are simply managed as “clusters of cultural and religious expression as equally worthy of abstract respect”.¹⁴⁵

Such ‘balkanised’ or ‘static’ pluralism is, ultimately an anthropological issue. “Our social identities are not constituted by one exclusive set of relations of modes of belonging”, Williams remarked in his ‘Sharia law’ lecture.¹⁴⁶ Human personhood is continually being modified in communication with the other, in the exercise of the imagination and in self-giving. While it is certainly better to see it as being forged in relationship, as opposed, say, to imagining the self as being self-generative or sovereign, it is nonetheless wrong to think that self is “exhausted” by a single set of relationships. Communal identities, even those that are religiously grounded, do not (or *should* not) “determine” the “entire horizon” of a person, so much as being something that the person brings into the “negotiating process” of the “public sphere”.¹⁴⁷

In this way, pluralism, if it is to remain healthy, needs to be malleable or, in Williams’ preferred phrase, “interactive”. By this model, communities may have strong identities but they must nonetheless be “capable of challenging one another, impinging on one another, making demands of one another, negotiating with one another, and finding together what is good for them.”¹⁴⁸ Ideally, our “belonging in society” should be a form of “interlocking pattern where we are always trying to find how different sorts of belonging map onto each other.”¹⁴⁹

This is pluralism that requires not “nervous or evasive good manners” but the kind of “argument [that] is essential to a functioning democratic state,” as he says in the Introduction to his collection *Faith in the Public Square*.¹⁵⁰ As opposed to “programmatic secularism”, in which public life is viewed as “a sphere of rational negotiation according to universal enlightened principles”, or the kind of multiculturalism that “seeks to keep the peace between essentially separate social groups or interest groups, with minimal government and much reliance on private initiative,” Williams advocates an interactive pluralism whereby the state’s “arbitrative” and “balancing” function[s] – important terms, as we shall see – enable “active partnership and exchange between communities themselves and between communities and state authority.”¹⁵¹

A similar point may be made, if more briefly, with regard to Williams' engagement with communitarianism – briefer because Williams' engagement with communitarianism is itself briefer, and because much of what was said about pluralism's "community of communities" applies to communitarianism in any case.

In the division drawn up a generation ago between liberals and communitarians, with figures like Rawls, Rorty and Dworkin on one side, and Taylor, MacIntyre and Sandal on the other, there would seem to be little doubt on whose side Williams would naturally stand. His relational and communicative anthropology, coupled with his antagonism toward individualism and self-ist ideologies clearly place him in communitarian ranks.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that when discussing communitarianism, in his essay 'Beyond Liberalism', Williams is critical, albeit offering the criticism of a fellow traveller. Building on Raymond Plant's sympathetic critique offered in *Politics, Theology and History*, and mentioned in the introduction above, Williams claims that "both the liberal and the communitarian refuse in their different ways the risk of political discovery", meaning specifically, "how the very idea of the good for me is modified, sometimes drastically, by the process of political engagement."¹⁵² He made a similar point a few years later shifting the lens from communities to their cultures, in a lecture on multiculturalism. There is something odd, he remarked, in regarding culture "as a fixed and given matter". On the contrary, if culture is "a mode of making sense of the world," it is, almost by definition, "inherently changeable".¹⁵³

Thus, in much the same way as pluralism can harden in to "static pluralism", so communitarianism can become "sectarian communitarianism". Moreover, there is a degree of "complicity" between liberals and communitarians "who are really doing little more than offering rival versions of the 'contract of mutual indifference', disagreeing only about the moral standing of the public tribunal of the state." Thus, although it might be reasonable to call Williams a 'communitarian pluralist' when it comes to his vision of the state, it is vital to recognise his reservations with both of those terms and to stress his own emphasis on the necessarily 'interactive' element within each, borne of his multi-dimensional and ultimately mysterious understanding of inexhaustible human personhood.

The state as (more than) a broker

Williams' qualified affirmation of pluralism and of communitarianism, best captured in his advocacy of "interactive pluralism", orients us towards a clear(er) understanding of the function of the state – hinted at above in the terms "arbitration" and "balancing" – which we will examine in generic terms, before honing in on his conceptualisation of the state's specific function vis-à-vis welfare.

In the first instance, the state exists to serve first level communities by means of which persons grow and mature through communication, imagination and self-giving. It is thus an ancillary institution whose role is "to serve the diverse human groupings that now constitute it", and derives its legitimacy "from their co-operation and consent as embodied in constitutional form."¹⁵⁴ This is done through *brokerage*, the state being the body to which "in practical affairs, communities defer to help them sort out potential areas of overlap and conflicting priority," with the interactive and argumentative nature of Williams' pluralism meaning that conflict is an inevitability and therefore brokerage both necessary and vital.¹⁵⁵

This is elsewhere described as a role of "mediation", "organisation", or "judgement", the last an obvious parallel to O'Donovan's conception of government as "public judgement", although not one that Williams follows up, despite acknowledging O'Donovan in the introduction to *Faith in the Public Square*. The state is "the structure needed to organise and mediate within a 'community of communities'".¹⁵⁶ It has "the right from time to time to judge how far particular behaviours and associations adversely affect the coexistence of the communities in its jurisdiction."¹⁵⁷

There is an important detail here that merits clarity and emphasis because the mechanism of law, by means of which the state acts as a broker or judge for and within the "community of communities", is apt to be misunderstood as an imposition from above, ordering and legitimising the associations in society. This is not Williams' understanding of law, as he is at pains to emphasise. The state is *not* "the all-powerful source of legitimate community life and action"¹⁵⁸ still less, "the source of legitimate behaviour or legitimate modes of association"¹⁵⁹ and cannot "prescribe in advance that behaviour unlicensed by the state should be publicly invisible or illegitimate."¹⁶⁰ "The 'lawful' state" he explains:

"is not one in which sovereign authority delegates downwards but one in which the component overlapping but distinct 'first-level' communities and associations that

make up the state are assured that their interests are both recognised and effectively brokered, so that none of these communities is threatened in its pursuit of social good by others.”¹⁶¹

This summary of the proper function of the state – as broker, by means of law, between communities within society – could feasibly be interpreted in an unduly ‘minimal’ way. However, in reality, Williams’ form of “brokerage” is not the morally thin, distant or objective kind that might be implied by the term. Indeed, he is at pains, on several occasions, to stress that the state is “more than a tribunal” and this is evidenced in two ways.¹⁶² Firstly, the state is not in itself a wholly disinterested, still less morally neutral, party in its exercise of duties, and secondly its legitimacy rests not simply on “settling and enforcing” the “boundary disputes” between first-level communities¹⁶³ but also on creating and sustaining the “conditions” for those communities in the first place. I will take each of those points in turn.

Williams is explicit in his acknowledgement that “the pluralist model assumes that the state is in no sense an interested party,” such as might have its own social goals that are “potentially in competition with those of its constituent communities.”¹⁶⁴ As soon as the state becomes just another social actor, with comparable agenda to those of first-level communities it has abnegated its unique role and responsibilities. To make use of a metaphor that Williams himself uses of ‘government’ in his lecture on the Big Society and of law in his essay ‘Beyond Liberalism’, the state is not just another player on the pitch but must remain a referee (or, in fact, as we shall see, more than just a referee) however tempting it might be get involved.

That noted, the very existence and nature of the ‘game’ in which “constituent communities” are interactively engaged is itself a morally significant fact. “The very idea of the coexistence of moral communities in a complex state could be seen as itself a convergent morality of sorts, and one with a theological underpinning.”¹⁶⁵ The manner in which the state does ‘referee’ the interactive and plural life of communities is more than simply peace-keeping but encourages each community to “see their account of the social good set in the context of other such accounts”, and ensures, indeed insists that each has to “argue its case [and] expose itself to the exchanges of the public forum.”¹⁶⁶

Moreover, the relationship between state and community actors is symbiotic, rather than one-way, the former needing to “build on the experience of co-operation and passionate

concern for the common good that is nurtured in particular communities” so that this sense of “mutual investment and mutually created well-being can carry across into the wider political realm.”¹⁶⁷ In other words, while in no way being another party like those between which it operates as a broker, the state is not simply a disinterested arbitrator but an institution that needs to reflect and draw on the community of communities within which it operates. The state is “not simply a dependable tribunal before which rights may be argued, but a legal and (in the broadest sense) moral framework within which communities may interact without the fear that any one may gain an unjust or disproportionate power.”¹⁶⁸

This leads on to the second reason why “broker” is a potentially misleading term, and indeed one that Williams supplements or modifies on several occasions. If the state is more than a tribunal in the sense outlined above, it is also “more than a tribunal” in the sense of being more ‘hands on’, so to speak, in its engagement with the community of communities, the state exercising “its lawful character” not simply by arbitrating between communities but “by promoting and resourcing collaboration” between them.¹⁶⁹

Williams describes this in a number of ways, his most common metaphors being of creating and sustaining the right “climate” or “conditions” for first-level communities. The legitimacy of the state “is about maintaining a climate in which interests can be argued about and negotiated”.¹⁷⁰ The state needs to provide “the stable climate” for all “first-level communities” to flourish and, in particular, the means “for settling, and enforcing boundary disputes between them.”¹⁷¹ It not only has a duty to “restrain and control” any groups whose notion of the good “veers towards anything that undermines the good of other groups”, but it should also “create the conditions...that allows each group to pursue what it sees as good”.¹⁷²

Beyond “climate” and “conditions”, Williams also describes this responsibility as creating a “‘civic space’ where all can find a voice”; as “mak[ing] connections... so that people have the capacity of taking the freedom that they really ought to have”; as “capacity building... [so that] the communities of civil society... [can] serve one another”, and as “sustain[ing] the vision that... communities... belong together and depend on one another.”¹⁷³ However such formulations might be interpreted – and we will come to how Williams does interpret it vis-à-vis the securing of welfare below – this is a long way from a small, distant, neutral, nightwatchman-like “broker” or “tribunal” state.

It is important to clear up a potential misunderstanding at this point, as some of this vision for the state might sound a little like the idea of the ‘market state’. This model, present in Williams’ work primarily in his Richard Dimbleby lecture, understands the function of government as being “to clear a space for individuals or groups to do their own negotiating, to secure the best deal or the best value for money in pursuing what they want.”¹⁷⁴ This involves a certain degree of “deregulation”, of “franchising” what were once state services, and “the withdrawal of the state from many of those areas where it used to bring some kind of moral pressure to bear.” Market government is to be judged “on its delivery of purchasing power and maximal choice”, politics now little more than “a matter of insurance.”¹⁷⁵

Williams’ vision is not this, in spite of any linguistic echoes (“to clear a space for... groups”), the reasons why helping us further grasp the greater reach of Williams “broker” state. This conception of the ‘market state’ is too close to the managerial state, outlined and outlawed above. It is one in which the individual “confronts” the state *as individual*, not as relationally-formed person, with expectations framed in the logic and language of rights and/ or consumption. In that regard, the market state is wholly antithetical to the more pluralist and communitarian contours of Williams’ vision. In particular, it fails to counter, and perhaps even exacerbates, the ways in which forms of “local solidarity in speech and habit [and]... social bonds ... [like] voluntary associations of different kinds, churches, the family itself” are relentlessly eroded:

“The market state is in danger of linking its legitimacy, its right to be taken seriously by citizens, to its capacity to maximise varieties of personal insurance; but as it does so, it reinforces those elements in popular political culture that undermine the very idea of reasonable politics, the rule of law and the education of active citizens.”¹⁷⁶

In reality, Williams’ state has more responsibility than the ‘market state’. More than a mere tribunal state, it has responsibilities to create and protect the conditions and climate for a ‘community of communities’, facilitating connections, clearing civic space and building capacity. In addition to this, however, there are further ‘bottom lines’, responsibilities in provision that no legitimate state can ignore.

Thus the state must provide “effective defence against outside attack” and “a high degree of internal stability”, including “a firm directive hand in the economy” and “a safety net of

public welfare provision.”¹⁷⁷ It must “protect us from acts that outrage human dignity”. It must “guarantee the ‘bottom line’ of liberty and dignity for all citizens.”¹⁷⁸ It must exercise a “commitment to universal dignity” through the “protection of human rights and guaranteed benchmarks of welfare and security.”¹⁷⁹

None of these is disconnected from the formal role of creating and regulating the climate for a “community of communities”. Indeed the two are linked, as no “community of communities” would be possible without the basic levels of security and stability just mentioned. Nonetheless, such a duty of provision is worth mentioning separately in as far as it reminds us, as we proceed to the specifics of welfare provision, that the state needs to do an awful lot, in terms of defence, law and order, a functioning judiciary, implementation of the rule of law, stable economic management, respect for human rights, and the like before it comes to the specifics of welfare.

Welfare

Williams is not precise on what his vision of the ‘thick brokerage’ state (not a phrase he uses but intended to capture the essence of his vision) would look like in practice. That said, he did, during his time at Canterbury, engage directly with some contemporary debates over welfare and on occasion cited various initiatives that gesture towards what his positive agenda might be.

Williams’ evaluation of the debate around “welfarism” is especially pertinent in as far as it provides as clear a connection between his welfare politics and his anthropology as is found anywhere in his writings. In spite of the ways in which the term is bandied about – “in a derogatory sense”, as an “abusive shorthand” – Williams recognises the reality behind the name-calling, for explicitly anthropological reasons.¹⁸⁰ He may “bridle” at the term but nonetheless acknowledges that “there is some substance to that suspicious use of the word. There is a problem about dependency.”¹⁸¹ While the “achievements of public welfare” have been “enormous”, and its intentions the “best”, it has sometimes generated an approach to “human issues, problems and challenges” that “strips human beings of their agency, their initiative, and their creative capacity for dealing with themselves and one another in collaboration.”¹⁸²

Welfare provision becomes “disabling” when “recipients or clients of social and health services are frozen in the attitude of supplicants, never becoming fellow-agents with those administering aid.”¹⁸³ In such circumstances, they are denied their capacity, “for internal

change and movement.”¹⁸⁴ They become people who are done to, rather than actually do. “They need but are not needed.”¹⁸⁵

Here we see the central elements of Williams’ anthropology – of persons growing and maturing through having something creative to communicate and give to others: of being “needed” – as informing his welfare politics. This is not to condemn state-based welfare, or to condone the familiar condemnation of welfare on the grounds of its failing to respect and thereby stunting people’s agency, however much aspects of the critique might coincide. Rather, it is the failure to recognise people *as givers*, living in response to God’s gift of creation and self, that threatens to erode their personhood, even as it might answer their needs. As Williams says, in one of his few references to William Temple on this matter, “to talk about human welfare only in terms of how needs are to be satisfied in emergencies, is precisely to be tied to the kind of passive account of humanity that Temple wished to avoid.”¹⁸⁶

If, therefore, we can see what forms of welfare Williams’ anthropology precludes, we might ask which forms it advocates. Here, we arrive at considerations of the “welfare society” and the “Big Society” and, more generally, the “localism” agenda that were politically prominent during much of Williams’ time at Canterbury. Williams’ attitude to the Conservative’s Big Society agenda appeared, superficially, to be hostile. In a widely reported article written in 2011 for the *New Statesman*, he remarked how the phrase “Big Society” was fast becoming “painfully stale” and that the government “badly need[ed] to hear just how much plain fear there is around such questions at present.”¹⁸⁷ He was (slightly misleadingly) quoted as saying the idea was “aspirational waffle”.¹⁸⁸ In a lecture on how the churches should respond to the idea, delivered the previous year, he expressed the concern that the Big Society “might just be an alibi for cost-cutting, and a way back to government washing its hands of that shared connection-making responsibility.”¹⁸⁹

In actual fact, Williams was somewhat more positive about the idea than the reporting of his remarks suggested. Not only did he observe, in the *New Statesman* article, that he didn’t think the government’s “commitment to localism and devolved power” was “simply a cynical walking-away from the problem”, he also offered an explicitly theological commendation of the “old syndicalist and co-operative traditions” on which the idea was based.

Although he stopped short of linking the Big Society itself or its Conservative sponsors with any theological foundations, he did express satisfaction that “several political thinkers today” – presumably thinking about Philip Blond, Adrian Pabst and John Milbank – were “quarrying theological traditions” for reform of welfare. These traditions, he reassured his *New Statesman* readers, were not the paternalist traditions of yore, with their well-meaning but problematic discourse about “the poor”, but rather “sustainable communit[ies]” through which circulates the “mutual creation of capacity, building the ability of the other person or group to become, in turn, a giver of life and responsibility.” This was, in effect, “the heart of St Paul’s ideas about community”, and clearly of real benefit and potential for contemporary Britain. Elsewhere, he called it a “remarkable opportunity” to think and talk “about a social model that is neither Fabian nor [Milton] Friedmanite, neither stateist nor consumerist,”¹⁹⁰ and gave it “two-and-a-half cheers”.¹⁹¹

His reservations were two-fold, one practical, the other ideological. The former concerned means. While lauding the turn to “grass-roots initiatives and local mutualism” inherent in the Big Society, he also registered that they had “been weakened by several decades of cultural fragmentation”, and could not be reinvented “overnight”. Civil society organisations were afraid of being asked to “pick up the responsibilities shed by government” with additional help. In this he was simply voicing concerns of many church leaders, such as those of the then Bishop of Leicester, who warned the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee that Ministers should not expect “the Church to behave like a local authority or a Government department”, and Charles Wookey, giving evidence to the same committee on behalf of Archbishop Vincent Nichols, who said, “as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, we do not want to raise expectations about what religious communities can suddenly do in replacing any kind of state provision. They can help, but they are only a very small part.”¹⁹²

Williams’ second reservation, actually made in two points in his *New Statesman* article, goes to the heart of question of what, in concrete terms, was the content of the state’s ‘thick brokerage’ role. While the state is legitimised by the “climate” or “conditions” it secured for a communities of communities to flourish, it also had certain fundamental standards – pertaining to “the ‘bottom line’ of liberty and dignity” mentioned in his William Temple lecture – that it had to secure. In the more specific language of the *New Statesman* article, he wrote:

“what services must have cast-iron guarantees of nationwide standards, parity and continuity?... What is too important to be left to even the most resourceful localism? [and] how, therefore, does national government underwrite these strategic ‘absolutes’”?¹⁹³

“Statutory policy”, he told the NCVO in 2004, “must not be a shifting of every public or communal burden on to the voluntary”, but rather “the creation of an environment in which action for shared welfare is assumed to be something that is endorsed and supported at every level of a society.”¹⁹⁴

Nowhere does Williams itemise what that environment might look like, but it is possible to piece some kind of picture together from scattered remarks. Thus, he strongly advocates a role for “professional and self-regulated bodies” such as professional institutions, associations, “guilds”, unions, and the like in the generation of an “ethos of ‘service’” that the state needs and from which it draws moral strength.¹⁹⁵ He registered support for Harold Laski’s “tantalizing idea of giving workplace groups real power against the supposed sovereignty of the omni-competent state”, an idea that “initiatives like Network Rail or Foundation Hospitals [might] have the courage and vision to realise.”¹⁹⁶

He championed “the cooperative tradition in the broadest possible sense”, acknowledging its “chequered career” but lauding it not simply because it was “about voluntary agencies responding to local problems”, but because it “was about keeping up simultaneously local initiative and pressure on the public purse to support local initiatives.” He applauded the New Deal for Communities programme, which since 1998 had made “made an enormous contribution to changing the tacit presumption that either central provision or pure voluntary labour alone can meet the challenges.”¹⁹⁷ He encouraged credit unions, commending them in the House of Lords as among the “locally based, entirely trustworthy, user-friendly, educationally sensitive and confidence-building methods of managing debt.”¹⁹⁸

He commended the role of churches (and other faith groups), insisting (repeatedly) that they were (and needed to be seen as) more than simply a reservoir of useful voluntary help. Rather, they were places in which “habits of agency”, “expectations of creative negotiation”, “patterns of self-displacing and self-risking”, practices of “mutuality and self-giving”, and models of “human togetherness in which every voice and every gift is crucial”, were nourished.¹⁹⁹

In all this – and in comparison with John Paul II – Williams is somewhat more reticent about the role of the family as a well-spring and resource for human welfare in society. This may be understood more as an absence of emphasis, rather than an absence altogether. Thus, Williams called a debate in the House of Lords in 2008 to draw attention “to the impact on the family of economic inequality, credit and indebtedness”. In a lecture given at St Andrew’s Cathedral in Singapore the previous year, he worried about the undermining of “stable patterns of family life”, in particular “the long-term and unconditional commitments of marriage and parenting, by a culture of short-termism consumerism.”²⁰⁰ To the Waltham Forest Credit Union he expressed concerns about the deleterious impact of debt on family life.²⁰¹ To the TUC, he emphasised that the human family “as a personal not just a biological unit” was the “indispensable foundation” for teaching humans “how to speak, how to trust, how to negotiate a world that isn’t always friendly”, and warned of how some employers continued “to reward family-hostile patterns of working.”²⁰²

That recognised, he was also clear about how certain strands of Christian conservatism have treated the family uncritically, and how there was a lot of “sentimental idealising of domestic life” that failed to recognise the potential “corruptions and tyrannies”.²⁰³ If churches defend the family, he said in 2010, “it’s not because we’re wedded to some distant and abstract notion of Family Values, (capital F, capital V,) but because of a deep conviction that what people need most as they grow is a sense of security and dependability in their emotional environment.”²⁰⁴ While he acknowledged that “the unconditionality of family love” could serve as “a faint mirror of the unconditional commitment of God”, the gospel message nonetheless assumed that “the community of the new humanity may cut across ‘natural’ belonging, in family or polity.”²⁰⁵

Thus, in much the same way as he qualified Christian attachment to nation and state, Williams said that however much the thought may be “uncongenial” to many British Christians, “the Church does not either affirm or deny ‘the family’ in the abstract.” Rather, it asks about “the structures of material and psychological control in this or that family”, and about how “the various patterns of family relation fail or succeed in creating creators of mutual relationship.”²⁰⁶ This is certainly not antagonism or indifference to the family, as is illustrated by his repeated willingness to draw attention to the ways in which family life can be undermined today. But nor it is the full-throated or unconditional support of the family as a bulwark to personal and communal flourishing that one hears in John Paul II.

Conclusion

Following the pattern established by Temple, Maritain and John Paul II, we can see how Williams affirms, augments and refines our picture of theological anthropology and the welfare state.

His link between the two is every bit as strong and clearly articulated as John Paul's. He shares the material, agential, relational and gift-oriented conceptualisation of the human that runs through all the figures. He repeats John Paul's connection of Eucharist, gift and personhood. And he affirms and strengthens Maritain's developmental approach to the person in his repeated rejection of the unattached, immobile, atemporal, indivisible self.

All that recognised, Williams' theological anthropology is the more self-consciously multi-dimensional than that of the other figures. He is particularly alert to the essentially communicative nature not just of the human person, but of all creation. He is especially clear on the final unknowability of personhood. He is most sensitive to the imaginative and creative dimension of the human person. And in much the same way as John Paul brought a more explicitly scriptural dimension to the discussion of personhood, Williams too introduces a fresh theological dimension to this personalist anthropology this time grounded in Eastern Orthodox thought, and in particular the work of Vladimir Lossky.²⁰⁷

There is a similar pattern of affirmation, augmentation and refining in his conceptualisation of the welfare state in the light of this theological anthropology. Just as Maritain and John Paul carefully position their understanding of the state in comparison to the (anthropologically) inadequate ideologies and models with which they were familiar, so Williams positions his vision of interactive and associational pluralism away from, and in contrast to Fabian socialism, Thatcherism and managerialism.

He transparently shares the now familiar conviction that the state should support the 'first-level' communities (including the family despite his reservations with the way some Christians talk about family life) in and through which people learn to communicate, relate, create, imagine, and give. His repeated metaphors of 'climate' and 'conditions' underline this, and his (sometimes qualified) support for the Big Society, professional groups, credit unions, trades unions, co-operatives, schools, families, "workplace groups", the church, other faith groups, and other self-regulated 'first-level' bodies gives substance to this idea.

Williams offers a more elaborate (if not always more transparent) discussion of the principles of the state's welfare functions. This is to provide and protect the legal, moral and material infrastructure by means of which 'first-level' communities exist and flourish through communication and collaboration. His welfare state is a 'broker' but – importantly – a practically and morally 'thick' one, which actively intervenes to aid, and draws energy and moral permission from, the communities that comprise society. Williams' welfare state is mandated to supervise these interactive plural communities so that none is, inadvertently or intentionally, excluded or impoverished.

No less importantly, however, his welfare state is mandated to ensure that the dignity and liberty of people who are citizens as well as neighbours, worshippers, and members is in no way violated. It is, in effect, compelled to respond satisfactorily to questions such as those he posed in his *New Statesmen* article: what services must have cast-iron guarantees of nationwide standards, parity and continuity?

Furthermore, in a voice that is closer to Temple's than to John Paul II's, Williams is happier to grant it a direct role in securing "a safety net of public welfare provision" and "a basic level of protection of human dignity". Hence the missing half-cheer for the Big Society, and his much-publicised criticism of that brief political endeavour. However much human personhood is nourished by the life of "first-level communities", its basic material and social conditions must also ultimately be guaranteed by the state.

¹ Williams (2010b)

² Williams quoted or referenced (approvingly) Philip Blond and Red Toryism; Maurice Glasman, and the incipient Blue Labour movement; Michael Sandel, Robert Skidelsky and their critique of neo-liberalism; Richard Sennet (frequently) on work and character; and the welfare economist Partha Dasgupta, among others in his time at Canterbury.

³ Williams (2012a), pp. 118-19.

⁴ Williams (2018a), p. x.

⁵ Williams (2012b)

⁶ See, for example, Williams (2009b)

⁷ See, for example, Williams (2008b)

⁸ See, for example, Williams (2012a), pp. 187, 194.

⁹ See, for example, Williams (2008c)

¹⁰ Accordingly, references in this chapter are either to Williams' books, some of which are collections of occasional essays and speeches, or to individual speeches that are not collected in published form but are otherwise available in the on-line Lambeth Palace archive which can be found here <http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/index.php>

¹¹ Highton (2004), p. 6.

¹² Williams (1999a), p. xii.

¹³ Williams (2012a), p. 2.

¹⁴ Highton (2004), p. 8.

¹⁵ Williams (1972), pp. 415-430

¹⁶ Chaplin (2012), p. 8.

5: Rowan Williams

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- ¹⁷ Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 45.
- ¹⁸ Williams (1999a), p. xii.
- ¹⁹ Williams (2008a), p. 231.
- ²⁰ Williams (2008a), p. 234.
- ²¹ Williams (2008a), p. 45.
- ²² Williams (1999a), p. 134.
- ²³ Williams (1999a), p. p. 4.
- ²⁴ Williams (1999a), p. 178.
- ²⁵ Williams (2004a), p. 108.
- ²⁶ Williams (2004a), p. 7.
- ²⁷ Williams (2012b)
- ²⁸ Williams (2000), p. 160.
- ²⁹ Williams (1999a), p. 239.
- ³⁰ Williams (1999a), p. 240.
- ³¹ Williams (2008f), emphasis original.
- ³² Williams (2012b)
- ³³ Williams (2008c)
- ³⁴ Williams (2009b). See also Williams, R. (2019)
- ³⁵ Williams (2018a), pp. 8-19.
- ³⁶ Williams (2012a), p. 151.
- ³⁷ Williams (2018a), p. 46.
- ³⁸ Williams (2018a), pp. 9-10.
- ³⁹ Williams (1983), p. 42.
- ⁴⁰ Williams (2014), p. 10. See also Williams (2009b) and Williams (2018a), p. 70.
- ⁴¹ Williams (2014), pp. 101, 121.
- ⁴² Williams (2014), p. xi.
- ⁴³ Williams (2012a), p. 177 (emphases added).
- ⁴⁴ Williams (2012a), p. 5.
- ⁴⁵ Williams (1999a), p. 74 (emphases added).
- ⁴⁶ Williams (2012a), p. 177 (emphases added).
- ⁴⁷ Williams (2014), p. xi.
- ⁴⁸ Williams (2001), p. 71.
- ⁴⁹ Williams (2012a), pp.154-56 (emphases original).
- ⁵⁰ Williams (1999a), p. 72.
- ⁵¹ Williams (2012a), p. 171. See also Williams (2018a), p. 36.
- ⁵² See Williams (2012a), p. 153.
- ⁵³ Williams (2014), p. 64.
- ⁵⁴ Williams (2012a), p. 229.
- ⁵⁵ Williams (2012a), p. 229.
- ⁵⁶ Williams (1999a), p. 241. (emphases original)
- ⁵⁷ Williams (1999a) p. 243.
- ⁵⁸ Williams (1972), p. 419. (emphases original)
- ⁵⁹ Williams (2000), p. 144.
- ⁶⁰ Williams (2004a), p. 47. See also Williams (2014), p. 79, 84"
- ⁶¹ Williams (2000), p. 137.
- ⁶² Williams in Gill (2011), p. 5.
- ⁶³ Williams (2001), p. 70.
- ⁶⁴ Williams (2018a), p. 32; Williams (2010c)
- ⁶⁵ Williams (2010a)
- ⁶⁶ Williams (2010a)
- ⁶⁷ Williams (1999a) p. 232.
- ⁶⁸ Williams (1999a) p. 213
- ⁶⁹ Williams (2010c)
- ⁷⁰ See Williams (1975), Williams (2018a) and also Williams (1989) and his essay on Lossky in Higton (2007).
- ⁷¹ Williams (2012d), Although the lecture was reproduced in *Being Human*, this passage was omitted.
- ⁷² Williams (2007b)
- ⁷³ Williams (2014), p. 93; Williams (1999a), p. 241.
- ⁷⁴ Williams (1999a), p. 241.

⁷⁵ Williams (2005)

⁷⁶ Williams (2009a)

⁷⁷ See Williams (2016a)

⁷⁸ Williams (2004b), p. 21.

⁷⁹ Williams (2008e)

⁸⁰ Williams (2008a), p. x.

⁸¹ Williams (2000), p. 186.

⁸² Williams (2008c)

⁸³ Williams (2009b)

⁸⁴ Williams (2004c)

⁸⁵ Williams (2005)

⁸⁶ Williams (2018b), p. 251.

⁸⁷ Williams (2005).

⁸⁸ Williams (2001), p. 71.

⁸⁹ Williams (2012a), p. 177.

⁹⁰ Williams (1999a), p. 218 (emphases original)

⁹¹ “Very rarely” may, in fact, be inaccurate; I have not found any reference to John Paul II anywhere in Williams’ writing or speeches, but their extensive and scattered nature means that I may have overlooked some.

⁹² Williams (2010a).

⁹³ Williams (2008f) (emphasis original).

⁹⁴ Williams (2018a), p. 45.

⁹⁵ Williams (2000), p. 160 (emphasis original).

⁹⁶ Williams (2008f) (emphasis original).

⁹⁷ Williams, (2004d).

⁹⁸ Williams (2008f)

⁹⁹ Williams (2008d)

¹⁰⁰ Williams (1999a), p. 70.

¹⁰¹ Williams (1999a) p. 219.

¹⁰² Williams (2018b), p. 250.

¹⁰³ Williams (2012b)

¹⁰⁴ Williams (2012a), p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ Williams (2004a), p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ For further examples of this see Williams (2009b), Williams (2007b), Williams (2010c).

¹⁰⁷ Williams (2004d)

¹⁰⁸ Williams (2008f)

¹⁰⁹ “Insofar as the project as the project of ‘self-creation’ challenges the priority of an eternal creating purpose outside this universe, it looks as though European modernity is basically hostile to any religious sense of the world and of human destiny.” Williams (2012a), p. 64.

¹¹⁰ “If we take it for granted that people habitually act from individual interest alone, it becomes unimaginable that anyone charged with representing the interest or long-term will do so consistently or effectively” Williams (2012c)

¹¹¹ “The human body cannot in the Christian scheme of things be regarded as an item of property.” Williams (2012a), p. 152.

¹¹² “Complete relativism about human beings is not actually something that can be sustained... We assume that there is a solid, human foundation of dignity. We assume that what’s good for me and for my neighbour is at the very least going to look quite similar at the end of the day, whatever cultural and local differences there are.” Williams (2010a)

¹¹³ “So if you only have scepticism about authority, that can take you back to a kind of fundamentalism about individual rights, and lead to a very fragmented society indeed.” Williams (2012a), p. 120.

¹¹⁴ Benjamin Myers’ formulation of Williams’ anthropology – “human persons can be known only negatively or apophatically, since personhood is itself a sort of negative property. We can never define what it is to be a person, since the ‘personal’ element is exactly what remains most dark and unknowable in another” – is slightly exaggerated, but it nonetheless contains an important truth. Myers (2012), p. 18.

¹¹⁵ Williams (2012b)

¹¹⁶ Williams (1999a), p. 272.

¹¹⁷ Williams (2004d)

¹¹⁸ Williams (2012a), p. 83.

¹¹⁹ Williams (2008f)

¹²⁰ Williams (2012b)

¹²¹ Williams (2012f)

- ¹²² Williams (2012f)
- ¹²³ Williams (2010c)
- ¹²⁴ Williams (2007b)
- ¹²⁵ Williams (2010c)
- ¹²⁶ Williams (2010b)
- ¹²⁷ Williams (1999), p. 35.
- ¹²⁸ Although Williams does occasionally refer to Blair in his speeches, I have failed to find a single direct reference to a Blairite Third Way.
- ¹²⁹ Williams (2002)
- ¹³⁰ Williams (2001), pp. 64-65.
- ¹³¹ Williams (2012b)
- ¹³² Williams (2004a), p. 20.
- ¹³³ Williams (2008f)
- ¹³⁴ Williams (2001), p. 64.
- ¹³⁵ Williams (2016b)
- ¹³⁶ Williams (1984)
- ¹³⁷ Williams (2010c)
- ¹³⁸ Williams (2011b)
- ¹³⁹ Williams (2012a), p. 50
- ¹⁴⁰ Williams (2012a), p. 126.
- ¹⁴¹ Williams (2012a), p. 126.
- ¹⁴² Williams (2012a), p. 126.
- ¹⁴³ Williams (2010a)
- ¹⁴⁴ Williams (2008f)
- ¹⁴⁵ Williams (2012a), p. 105.
- ¹⁴⁶ Williams (2008b)
- ¹⁴⁷ Williams (2008f)
- ¹⁴⁸ Williams (2008f)
- ¹⁴⁹ Williams (2009a)
- ¹⁵⁰ Williams (2012a), p. 4.
- ¹⁵¹ Williams (2012a), p. 61.
- ¹⁵² Williams (2001), p. 66.
- ¹⁵³ Williams (2012a), pp. 103-05.
- ¹⁵⁴ Williams (2012a), p. 31.
- ¹⁵⁵ Williams (2008f)
- ¹⁵⁶ Williams (2012a), p. 126.
- ¹⁵⁷ Williams (2012a), p. 31.
- ¹⁵⁸ Williams (2012a), p. 126.
- ¹⁵⁹ Williams (2012a), p. 31.
- ¹⁶⁰ Williams (2012a), p. 31.
- ¹⁶¹ Williams (2012a), p. 53.
- ¹⁶² Williams (2012a), p. 59.
- ¹⁶³ Williams (2012a), p. 50.
- ¹⁶⁴ Williams (2012a), p. 58.
- ¹⁶⁵ Williams (2012a), p. 58.
- ¹⁶⁶ Williams (2012a), p. 58.
- ¹⁶⁷ Williams (2012a), p. 128.
- ¹⁶⁸ Williams (2012a), p. 81.
- ¹⁶⁹ Williams (2012a), p. 59.
- ¹⁷⁰ Williams (2012c)
- ¹⁷¹ Williams (2012a), p. 50.
- ¹⁷² Williams (2012a), p. 50-53.
- ¹⁷³ Williams (2012a), p. 128; Williams (2010c)
- ¹⁷⁴ Williams (2002)
- ¹⁷⁵ Williams (2002)
- ¹⁷⁶ Williams (2002)
- ¹⁷⁷ Williams (2002)
- ¹⁷⁸ Williams (2008f)

¹⁷⁹ Williams (2012a), pp. 45-46.

¹⁸⁰ Williams (2008f)

¹⁸¹ Williams (2012b)

¹⁸² Williams (2012b); Williams (2012f)

¹⁸³ Williams (1999a), p. 220.

¹⁸⁴ Williams (2008f)

¹⁸⁵ Williams (1999a), p. 220.

¹⁸⁶ Williams (2008f)

¹⁸⁷ Williams (2011c)

¹⁸⁸ In actual fact he said that “‘Big Society’ rhetoric is all too readily heard by many as aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable.” Williams (2012a), p. 266.

¹⁸⁹ Williams (2010c)

¹⁹⁰ Williams (2012a), p. 277.

¹⁹¹ Williams (2010c)

¹⁹² House of Commons (2012)

¹⁹³ Williams (2011c)

¹⁹⁴ Williams (2004d)

¹⁹⁵ Williams (2012c)

¹⁹⁶ Williams (2008f)

¹⁹⁷ Williams (2006)

¹⁹⁸ Williams (2008d). See also Williams (2004c)

¹⁹⁹ Williams (2008f); Williams (2001), p. 71; Williams (2008c); Williams (2010c)

²⁰⁰ Williams (2007b)

²⁰¹ Williams (2004c)

²⁰² Williams (2009b)

²⁰³ Williams (2009b); Williams (2004a), p. 21.

²⁰⁴ Williams (2010c)

²⁰⁵ Williams (1999b), p. 48. The version of this lecture printed in *Anglican Identities* (p. 21) changes “polity” to “tribal belonging”.

²⁰⁶ Williams (1999a), p. 237.

²⁰⁷ Lossky was the subject of Williams doctoral thesis and in his 2012 Theos lecture Williams called Lossky’s 1955 essay “The Theological Notion of ‘The Human Person’ a “watershed in modern theological thinking” from which “a ‘personalist’ style of theology” began to emerge across the Christian world.” See Williams (1975) and Williams (2018a), p. 28. Also his essay on Lossky in Higton (2007) and his remarks on John Zizoulas’s *Being as Communion* in Williams (1989), p. 101.

6: Multi-dimensional personhood and the welfare state

Introduction

For reasons outlined in the introductory chapter, this thesis has eschewed familiar approaches to the question of ‘the’ welfare state, grounded in ideas of justice, efficiency, or fiscal sustainability for example, on the basis, justified by Plant and illustrated by Deacon, that such approaches are themselves grounded ultimately in anthropological commitments. All such contested social concepts, whether justice, equality, need, freedom, or efficiency, are predicated on further questions of ‘for whom?’ or ‘to what ends?’ At a deep level, we need to recognise and engage the human goods and, underlying them, the human nature that inform both what ‘welfare’ the state ‘provides’ and how it does so.

A second advantage to this approach is that it allows us to sidestep the familiar secular criticism of religious engagement in the politics of welfare. In its more sophisticated form, this adopts the Rawlsian arguments outlined in the introduction, concerning the inadmissibility of introducing any comprehensive moral doctrine in justifying state policies. In less sophisticated forms, it simply asserts that politics is the domain of reason and evidence, in which ‘faith’ has no place. Either way, by adopting an anthropological approach to the welfare state, we not only head straight to the deepest level of discussion, but also (changing metaphors) level the playing field, by underlining how all approaches to welfare, whether theological or secular, ‘faith-based’ or ‘rational’, necessarily draw on commitments and beliefs that may be reasonably debated, but cannot finally be rationally demonstrated. Ultimately, an anthropological approach to the proper function of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare is not only a truer and more penetrating one, but also fairer and more honest.

Our close reading of the manner in which the theological anthropology of Temple, Maritain, John Paul II, and Williams informed their conception of the purpose and role of the state vis-à-vis the provision of welfare offers us two approaches to the wider question of the proper function of the welfare state. The first lies in the rich, varying, overlapping but, above all, multi-dimensional conception of the person, which speaks directly to the foundational anthropological concerns outlined by Alan Deacon and, indirectly, Raymond

Plant, in our opening chapter. Accordingly, the first two sections of this concluding chapter return to Deacon and Plant, and explore the contribution that multi-dimensional theo-political anthropology of Temple *et al* has to make to the existing debates outlined in the introductory chapter.

The second approach lies in the articulations of the welfare/ social assistance state made by each of the four thinkers. These, it will be clear by now, tend to be less rather than more concrete, are often piecemeal, and are often informed by the time and circumstances of writing. Moreover, all of the four thinkers are happier proscribing illicit or untenable conceptions than prescribing licit ones. In short, it is neither possible nor legitimate to read anything like a full account of the welfare state directly from the pronouncements of the four thinkers under discussion.

That recognised, the fact that all four thinkers do attempt, to varying degrees, to unpack what their theo-political anthropology might look like in practice – or at least point in the direction of what a welfare state that honoured and nurtured the Christian concept of the person would look like – is helpful and not to be ignored. Temple *et al* do not spell out their preferred welfare ‘regime’ but they do offer ideas and examples of what such a welfare regime might entail. In respect of this, therefore, the third section of this concluding chapter returns to the discussion initiated by Esping-Andersen’s pioneering work on welfare regimes, and explores how the preceding chapters orient us within, but also ask questions of, the landscape of welfare regimes.

In this way, these three sections – bringing the work of Temple *et al* into dialogue with the conceptual framework of Deacon, Plant and Esping-Andersen – end up delineating the kind of welfare state towards which those informed by Christian theology might commit their energies. But it invariably does so in a slightly fragmentary way, so the second half of this conclusion draws these strands together and outlines what this welfare state might look it, focusing specifically on its foundation, funding, structure and ethos. The thesis thus concludes, not with a blueprint for a Christian welfare state, were such a thing even possible, but a series of principles and suggestions around which more concrete proposals might be developed.

Returning to Deacon: The importance of multi-dimensionality in political theological anthropology

The centrality of (theological) anthropology to scrutiny of the (welfare) state is explicitly recognised by each of the four thinkers in this study. Williams' observation that "it's impossible to have anything resembling an intelligent discussion in the political and social realm without struggling to clarify what we actually believe about human beings," can stand for all of them, and offers a robust corroboration of Alan Deacon's conviction that arguments about welfare are rooted in "fundamental disagreements about the nature of human beings."

That noted, our analysis of Temple *et al* does more than simply endorse Deacon's anthropological approach. Indeed, it provides an important corrective to how it is presented by Deacon and his subjects. Temple *et al* articulate a range of theo-anthropological characteristics that cannot be captured by the uni-dimensional scale of selfishness to altruism that is central to Deacon's analysis. Indeed, it is striking that, however centrally different thinkers do place 'agency', 'responsibility', or 'fellowship' within their anthropology, none ventures an analysis based on selfishness or altruism.

Within each of the thinkers, the person or, more precisely, the elements of the person relevant to any discussion of welfare, are complex and go beyond any linear conceptualisation of how people relate to one another. In this regard, Williams' metaphor of the "three-dimensional person" is apposite and helpful, albeit shorn of its numerical specificity. Temple *et al* underline the fundamentally anthropological nature of these discussions but insist on their irreducible multi-dimensionality too. If we are going to inform the function and process of the welfare state by attending to the nature of the persons it must serve, we must resist any attempt to capture that nature too readily or simply.

This complexification factor is further exacerbated by a factor that is most clearly visible in Maritain's theological anthropology, namely the fluid or developmental nature of personhood. Not only can the human person not be captured on a linear scale, but s/he changes, matures and grows in their personhood over time. This theme – that "the human person... is but a person in embryo" as he puts it in *Scholasticism and Politics* – is repeated through Maritain's work, though not only there (Williams has a strong sense of personal growth and development), and has, as Maritain intimates, significant implications for

political thought. Our political settlement must recognise persons as they *become*, as well as persons as they *are*. The city, as he puts it in *Integral Humanism*, is a society “not of men installed in definitive dwellings, but of men en route.” A truly humanist politics, in Maritain’s conception, is predicated on “a ‘peregrinal’ conception of the city.”

This multi-dimensional (and developmental) nature of the person is manifest in each of the four thinkers and should counsel us against unduly tidy articulations of ‘human nature’. Sometimes tensions reside within an individual thinker, acknowledged or not. Thus, Temple and Maritain could each sound differing notes on, respectively, the nature and severity of sin, and the nature of human materiality. Temple could range from speaking as if human sin were rooted simply in the balance between good and evil in which humans were poised, to speaking as if it were a far more complete and permanent disordering of human nature. Maritain varied less because his underlying Thomistic schema was less vulnerable to the circumstantial attacks of the period through which he and Temple both lived. Nevertheless, he too could sound different notes about whether human materiality was simply part of human nature, co-existing with the spiritual like a canvas did with art, or ultimately antagonistic to personality, a different “pole” or “slope” that threatened to undermine true personality.

Sometimes there is apparent tension between thinkers’ conceptions of the person. To take one example, on the surface of it there is friction between John Paul II’s and Rowan Williams’ conception of (the significance of) reason within the human person, Williams being more reserved about its significance and capacity to determine truth. This may simply be a friction born of emphasis: Williams rarely speaks of human rationality as a significant composite element in the human person, whereas John Paul II does, most obviously in *Fides et ratio*. Alternatively, it could be a result of different theological ‘styles’: Williams’ theology self-consciously allows for a more open, dialogic and apophatic approach to the human, whereas John Paul II is more confident in saying things definitively. For all that it is hard to imagine Williams *saying*, after John Paul, that the human has a “ceaselessly self-transcendent orientation towards the truth”, however, the pope’s location of reason in “bodily and sense faculties,” and his sensitivity to reason’s “wound[ing]” by sin is entirely consonant with Williams’ theology. In short, as we shall note below, a properly balanced and moderated multi-dimensional conception of human personhood can work towards reconciling the apparent tensions between thinkers.

Such reconciliation of apparent tension suggests that, for all that we must withstand the temptation to define the person by any linear simplicity or finality, there is nonetheless considerable correspondence in our four thinkers' theological anthropology. Recognising the multi-dimensionality and developmental nature of personhood, and relinquishing the impulse to tidy up and classify authoritatively does not entail abandoning all attempts at coherence or clarity. We *can* say things about human personhood, and the theological anthropologies of Temple *et al* overlap and cohere sufficiently for us to offer an understanding of the human which, while not conclusive or precise, is more than simply a Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance'.

That this is so is evidenced by the categories educed from the four thinkers and used to structure the analysis of their theological anthropology in the previous four chapters, cumulatively summarised in the conclusions to the relevant chapters. Albeit with subtly different emphases, Temple, Maritain, John Paul II and Williams share a conception of the human that is created, material, agential, sinful, relational, transcendent, creative, and oriented to, and fulfilled by gift. The precise terminology here is contestable. Created and material may elide and may also encompass a sense of human vulnerability. Agential can stand for self-determining and orientated to the exercise of freedom. Relational includes 'associational' and arguably also 'political'. The nine terms used are selected on account of their presence in all (or most) of the thinkers under discussion, and, in as far as possible, on account of their proximity to the language actually used by the four theologians.

In addition to this, it should be stressed that unless nuanced by each other, these precise terms are apt to mislead. For example, the common emphasis on effective moral agency (or 'freedom' or 'human self-determination') is liable to lead towards a misconception of the person unless her embedding in, and modification by, human createdness, materiality (or 'corporeality') and relationality (or 'sociality' or 'fellowship') is equally emphasized.

It is by means of such mutual modification that we might approach the apparent tensions within the overall vision of human nature each espouses. Thus, as noted above, John Paul II's emphasis on human orientation towards truth, capacity for rationality, and exercise of reason should be moderated by his insistence on the embeddedness and fallibility of reason, and by Williams' insistence on the ultimate mystery of creation and the human person. In this way, it is important not only to recognise the multi-dimensional and developmental nature of the human person underlying any conception of the welfare state,

but to hold the various different elements or dimensions together in what would be a dynamic and creative tension.

This should be the case even with regard to what I have argued in this thesis is the most significant element of human personhood for these thinkers, namely, the idea of gift. This might be understood as unifying and summarising the collective elements of human personhood, as we see the idea of gift in the creation, Christological, Trinitarian, and Eucharistic theology discussed. Not only do all four thinkers cite gift in itself, but each in his own way sees it as central to the idea who God is, what creation is, who humans are, and how they should live. It is through gift that the person understands God, creation and self.

Accordingly, it is tempting to make ‘gift’ *the* foundational element within our theological anthropology, not least as it has recently come to the fore in a number of prominent and important Christian interventions into precisely the socio-political sphere in which this thesis operates. Thus, Italian economists Luigino Bruni and Stefano Zamagni in their book *Civil Economy* re-embed economic models of production, consumption and distribution and welfare provision and civil society within a framework of reciprocity, “the typical element of human sociality,” and gratuitousness, “a free and open gift, or offering, in a larger setting of reciprocal exchanges between peers”.¹

Luke Bretherton, in his chapter on ‘Economy, Debt and Citizenship’ in *Resurrecting Democracy*, taking his cue from Bruni and Zamagni (and Polanyi), discusses how democratic citizenship can be “conceptualised... as involving forms of gift relation” before disaggregating the rather homogenizing term “social capital” into five forms of “sociality” understood as patterns and norms of gift – equivalent exchange, redistribution, gift exchange, grace, and communion.² Most influentially (and elegantly), Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* wrote that “the human being is made for gift” (#34), and then proceeded to structure his analysis on this, delineating “giving in order to acquire (the logic of exchange)”, “giving through duty (the logic of public obligation, imposed by State law)”, and the “principle of gratuitousness... the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity” (#39)

None of these frameworks is in tension with the argument of this thesis. Indeed, each in its own way presents a powerful affirmation of the centrality of gift to the human and wider social good. However, I have eschewed gift as the all-encompassing terminology, in the way that Bruni, Zamagni, Bretherton, and Benedict use it, for two reasons. The first is that the idea of gift as “reciprocity”, or as “equivalent exchange” or “through duty” is in danger of

obscuring the fundamentally gratuitous and indeed kenotic nature of gift as discussed in the theological anthropology of my subjects, thereby making ‘gift’ something less than it is. The second is that, attractive as the all-encompassing idea of gift may be, it threatens to collapse the multi-dimensionality of personhood back into a single, uni-dimensional understanding, with all the limitations that has, ‘gift’ sliding back into something like the Deacon’s ‘altruism’ from which we have escaped.

Returning to Plant: Multi-dimensional theological anthropology and contestable social concepts

The theological anthropology of Temple *et al* allows us to return to and affirm the principle outlined by Deacon, that welfare thinking draws on anthropological presuppositions, while challenging and complexifying the nature of that relationship. How we conceive the welfare state will draw on our understanding of human nature and the human good, but we need to go beyond any one-dimensional conception of the human, based on, for example, the extent to which we are straightforwardly selfish or altruistic, in favour of a multi-dimensional, developmental, and mutually-correcting understanding of personhood.

This, in turn, enables us to return to the work of Raymond Plant and bring this richer conception of the human to bear on the task of conceiving the contestable social concepts that, he argues, underpin welfare and indeed all social policy. The impossibility of a “neutral account” of human nature and goods opens up the possibility of conceiving essentially contestable social concepts like need, freedom and community in the light of the persons to which they pertain. In doing so, it becomes clear that the multi-dimensional nature of the human person is of particular importance.

This can be seen with particularly clarity in the case of ‘need’, historically the dominant social concept when it came to thinking about welfare, particularly in those regimes identified as ‘liberal’ by Esping-Andersen. To reiterate Plant’s observation, the precise form ‘need’ takes will be determined by who is doing the needing and, correspondingly, for what purposes: “needs are means to ends: a subject always needs something for some purpose.”³ With that in mind, we can see how conceptualising personhood according to human created materiality orients our understanding of ‘need’ towards the provision of adequate level of material goods, such as housing, healthcare and food, and that conceptualising personhood *primarily* or *exclusively* in this way will tend to elevate that welfare provision above any and all other considerations, legitimising a state whose duty of material welfare

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provision outweighs any comparable duties in respect of human freedom, agency or community.

Conversely, if we conceptualise personhood as the capacity to exercise freedom, self-determination, autonomy, and effective moral agency, as Temple, Maritain and John Paul II in their own ways clearly do, and then treat this dimension as primary or exclusive, we will tend to orient ourselves towards a state that will intervene only in so far as it can facilitate the exercise of agency, and may not even do that. This could result in the kind of ‘New Liberal’ state that was ascendant during Temple’s early years, or alternatively the kind of Anglo-Saxon ‘liberal’ welfare regime identified by Esping-Andersen, depending on the extent to which material security is deemed a prerequisite of effective agency.

A multi-dimensional approach to personhood thus also complexifies and arguably enriches our conceptualisation of contestable social concepts like need, deterring us from fixing on any simple or univocal definition of them. Beyond that, however, the multi-dimensional anthropology derived from Temple *et al* implies that we should resist the idea that any single social concept that should dictate the purpose and format of a welfare state, whether that be ‘need’ in the case of Esping-Andersen’s ‘liberal’ regime, ‘contribution’ or ‘merit’ in the ‘conservative’ or ‘state-corporatist’ regime, or ‘citizenship’ in the ‘social democratic’ regime. The persons that the welfare state is ordered to serve are multi-dimensional and developmental, their goods are accordingly plural, and the contestable social concepts that underpin the welfare state will be various.

We can see something of this by taking the common dimensions of human personhood, as elicited from our analysis of Temple *et al*, and exploring which social concepts they orient us towards. Thus, as already mentioned, the fundamentally *created* and *material* nature of the person points us to a certain level of guaranteed material security and dignity. Put concretely, a state that ignores that fact that any of its citizens are homeless, hungry or wholly vulnerable to ill health because without basic medical coverage, is one that is failing in its responsibility to protect and honour their fundamental good. If the state’s service of the human person is truly to honour their personhood, it must guarantee that their physical and material good is secured to an appropriate (though naturally still contestable) level.

Similarly, and again as mentioned, the fundamental need for persons to be able to exercise their freedom and agency orients us towards affording citizens the maximal opportunity to

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secure their own welfare within the constraints of other anthropological dimensions. The state that takes human freedom and agency seriously will not seek simply to determine or procure welfare *for* its citizens but will work to generate opportunities for citizens to achieve their own standards of welfare. It will, in effect, combine its responsibilities for material security with those of respecting individual and associational agency, and work *with* people rather than instead of them in achieving this end.

To these two dimensions, we can profitably add four more. Temple *et al* speak with one voice in their insistence on ‘fellowship’, ‘relationality’, and ‘communication’ as central to human personhood. Alongside material dignity and a meaningful sense of agency, the freedom, opportunity and resources for persons to *come together* and *collaborate* in pursuit of shared interests and goods is a fundamental good in itself. The implications here are manifold but with specific regards to the function of the welfare state it highlights the centrality of those associations that comprise ‘civil society’ in identifying and highlighting social needs, generating the moral energy of response, orchestrating collaboration, and tailoring the appropriate action that works alongside and with the communities in question, rather than for them.

A fourth, significant if ambiguous dimension lies in the cognizance of human sinfulness. This, as noted, was recognised to various levels among the four thinkers, although none articulated a view that would necessitate the kind of welfare system that had to rely solely or even primarily on self-interest as its engine. Human sinfulness was a, not the, factor in their theological anthropology.⁴ That said, however much this might push Temple *et al* away from the Field/ Thatcher end of Deacon’s spectrum (noting, as above, that this spectrum is in itself inadequate), their mere cognizance of human sinfulness also removes them from the opposite end of the spectrum, with Titmuss and his ideas of natural altruism.

In this way, the recognition, but complex conceptualisation of, personal and structural sin – coupled with the developmental nature of personhood, and the sense that persons are all capable of *less* sinful or selfish behaviour if they are drawn in that direction by appropriate relationships and encounter with the gratuitous ‘gift’ of the other – does not bring us to any particular model of the welfare state. More modestly, what it can be judged to do is underline the need for all bodies and agents operating in the provision of welfare – whether through state, market, or civil society – to come under appropriate scrutiny.

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Human motivation will never be as generous or kenotic as it could or should be, and humans will always try “to remake the world around [themselves]”, as Williams defines sin in one of his very few descriptions of it, but neither is it such that social structures are compelled to rely only on that aspect of human personhood. Human sin, rather, has a more modest role in the shaping of the provision of welfare, through insisting that no structure or practice is wholly adequate or reliable, and that however much we might choose to centralise or decentralise the provision of welfare, the human propensity for sin makes it necessary to monitor and evaluate all parties involved.

A fifth relevant dimension of personhood can be seen in the universal recognition of human transcendence and, in a corresponding although distinct way, in Williams’ repeated emphasis on human creativity and imagination. The first of these locates a quintessential characteristic of personhood in its capacity, to reference John Paul II, to transcend material reality, access “the metaphysical dimension of reality”, and “share in the divine mystery of the life of the Trinity”. There is, in other words, a dimension within personhood that is inaccessible to earthly agents, and not exhausted by material reality. This is augmented by Williams’ discussion of human creativity, which stresses how this aspect of personhood in which no-one can ever be completely “‘captured’, even in decades of relationship,”⁵ is linked with the irreducibly creative and imaginative dimensions of the human. The creative dimension is part of human openness to God, our transcendence and ultimately unfathomable nature.

Critically, for our purposes, and as Williams is at pains to emphasise, such a creative and imaginative dimension is not limited to ‘creative industries’ but a vital element of politics and social campaigning, whether that is in generating the “moral energy and imagination” required by politics, campaigning about debt or fair trade, or developing credit unions. Such a focus on human transcendence and creativity, orients us towards a welfare system that remains *open*, and is constantly alert, sympathetic, and supportive to creative local and communal attempts to address poverty and other forms of social need. Rather than being a state, in the sense of being static, a welfare state that honours this aspect of human personhood, should act as a laboratory, incubator and catalyst for new, innovative experiments in the provision of welfare.

A sixth and final relevant dimension of personhood lies in the concept of gift common to all four thinkers. This, superficially, is a more straightforward dimension when it comes to

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informing the welfare state, as it self-evidently implies a system that gives everyone the opportunity to give to one another's good, whether that is in terms of money, time, information, expertise, space, or simply presence. It is, in effect, the kind of state that gives space for Benedict XVI's "principle of gratuitousness", structures and moments of "fraternity" in which our personhood is most fully realised and developed, and we imitate and partake in the self-giving life of God.

One might at first think this fulfilled in the third dimension mentioned above, namely that of 'fellowship', 'relationality', or 'communication', and to some extent it is. Our relationality requires the gift of ourselves. However, to return to the discussion of Bruni, Zamagni and Bretherton earlier, to do so runs the risk of misrepresenting the quintessentially *kenotic* idea of gift within Christian thought and confusing it with the (admirable, important, humanising, but nonetheless different idea of) reciprocity.⁶

Gift is different from reciprocity, and a welfare state that properly honours the idea of gift will do more than simply afford and encourage a relational response. That recognised, *how* it might do this is very far from straightforward. There is an argument that the best way the state can encourage people to give is to give them the resources that free them up to do just that. This idea, variously known as Universal Basic Income or Citizens' Income is increasingly popular today and sometimes articulated on Christian theological grounds.⁷ Moreover, there are moments in Temple's and Maritain's work in which both thinkers appear to be advocating just such a system. In this way, it may appear as if the 'logic of gift' orients us towards a particular (and innovative) contemporary approach to welfare.

Against this, however, are the powerful arguments, firstly, that gift simply cannot be compelled or even induced by the well-meaning state, and, secondly, that Universal Basic Income treats citizens exclusively as recipients, an improbable foundation for helping them develop their personality as givers. This view is most clearly audible in John Paul II, with his reservations concerning those measures that extend the state's economic power over individuals, but it is perceptible among the others.

The idea of gift, therefore, may have something in common with the idea of sin, when it comes to the design of a welfare state: not dictating a particular overarching structure but, more modestly, stipulating that the welfare state needs to encourage and afford opportunities for as much 'gratuitousness' as possible. If the state is unable to compel 'gift', and if (as I believe) it needs to be extremely cautious about systemic approaches, like UBI,

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that claim to be able to induce gift – for fear of what that approach may mean for other dimensions of personhood like agency and relationality – the state can and should foster and promote all local examples of welfare as gift, in the same manner in which it should also work as an incubator of creative welfare experiments.

Thus, just as the multi-dimensional concept of personhood educed from Temple *et al* both confirms *and challenges* the anthropological approach outlined by Deacon, so it does the same for the contestable social concepts highlighted by Plant. Although with the potential to clarify and define some of the contestability of the relevant and significant social concepts, the multi-dimensional concept of personhood – with its idea of humans as created, material, agential, sinful, relational, transcendent, creative, and oriented to, and fulfilled by gift – is better served by allowing it to identify which are the relevant and significant social concepts themselves.

I have argued in this section that doing this orients us towards a welfare state defined by material dignity, respect for agency, the relationality of civil society, appropriate monitoring and evaluation, and a willingness to foster creative experiment, and groups and organisations that are motivated by, encourage, gratuity in their efforts.

Returning to Esping-Andersen: multi-dimensionality and the limitations of welfare regimes

In the same way that the ideas of Temple *et al* affirm, critique and complexify those of Deacon and Plant, they also engage sympathetically but critically with those of Esping-Andersen and the concept of welfare regimes.

Esping-Andersen's innovative intervention in the field of welfare state studies was grounded in the idea that discussion and evaluation of welfare states needed to get beyond measures of 'more or less' – spending, redistribution, progressive taxation, etc. – and include questions not simply of how much is spent but where, how and why. Such an approach is indisputably supported by the thinking of Temple *et al* for whom the direct question of the size of the welfare state, or indeed the means of raising and distributing resources, only rarely comes into focus. Whatever else the welfare state is to Temple, Maritain, John Paul II and Williams, it is more than a matter of 'bigger or smaller'.

Much of this, it should be acknowledged, is explicable by the style, status and expertise (or lack thereof) of the authors. As is clear from preceding chapters, Temple *et al* are happier

speaking in general terms rather than particular. Three of the four wrote from positions of high ecclesiastical authority and profile, and this naturally deterred overly specific, political interventions. Moreover, none of the four would claim expertise when it came to the development and implementation of detailed welfare policies. To this extent at least, we would not expect much specificity from them when it came to questions of the funding or distribution of welfare.

That recognised, their distance from the ‘bigger or smaller’ debate is nonetheless in accord with Esping-Andersen’s critique of it. In the same way as Williams argued that the Church neither affirms nor denies “the family” or “the nation” in the abstract, but asks how far and in which ways they “fail or succeed in creating creators of mutual relationship,”⁸ so Temple *et al* do not, in the abstract, support or reject a larger or smaller welfare state, but ask how far it recognises, nurtures and develops of the person, or fails to.

Thus, although the thought of Temple *et al* offers support for Esping-Andersen’s reformulation of the way we think about welfare regimes, they do not go on to offer obvious support for any one of his regimes. Esping-Andersen’s work was pioneering, in large measure, because it offered a new and sophisticated theoretical-empirical study of welfare states.⁹ His categorisations have, therefore, naturally been open to challenge and modification by political and social scientists.¹⁰ The work of Temple *et al* tacitly supports that challenge just as much as it supports Esping-Andersen’s original idea of welfare regimes. No one regime wholly captures the full breath of their theological anthropology. Each is as open to critique as others, and the various elements of personhood educed from their theological anthropology are liable to exist in (creative) tension with one another when applied to the design and implementation of concrete welfare policies and institutions.¹¹

Thus, all four thinkers place an emphasis on the exercise of agency, and the responsibility of persons to act for their own welfare and that of others rather than relying on the state in the first instance or conceiving themselves primarily as recipients. Moreover, the classic liberal emphasis on work as the foundation of welfare is powerfully echoed, in particular by John Paul II and the William Temple of the 1930s. Indeed, John Paul II was sufficiently supportive of the market state in *Centesimus annus*, and sufficiently critical of the Social Assistance State, to enable liberal critics to call the encyclical “a decisive turn toward the liberal model of the state”. Similarly, Temple could say in *Christianity and Social Order* that

the art of government is “the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands”, a statement that, tellingly, Margaret Thatcher would quote with approval.¹²

That said, all four also favour a strong element of market decommodification, to pick up on the first of Esping-Andersen’s dimensions, and critique those welfare regimes in which decommodification is at its weakest, sometimes vociferously so.¹³ Personality, as Maritain writes, must not be made subservient to capital.¹⁴ John Paul II explicitly eschewed the term ‘capitalism’ in favour of “business economy”, “market economy” or simply “free economy”. Thus, whatever else a welfare regime consonant with the multi-dimensional personhood might look like, and however one might see signs of it in a liberal regime, it is certainly not satisfactorily captured by that regime.

A similar point can be made of the social democratic regime. On one side, each of the four thinkers places a strong emphasis on the state’s responsibility for the welfare of all its citizens. They eschew any sense of stigma around welfare, in line with the culture of a social democratic system. Temple, for all he could be quoted out of context to favour a liberal welfare regime, articulated the most concrete social democratic welfare proposal of all four thinkers here. Maritain relied on a wide range of rights, guaranteed and enforced by the state, as the basis of welfare. Williams’s state had certain non-negotiable responsibilities, among them ensuring “a safety net of public welfare provision.”¹⁵ All this could be read as an uncomplicated endorsement of the social democratic welfare regime.

And yet, all four thinkers also had clear reservations about aspects of a social democratic regime. Such a regime’s unmediated identification and direct provision of welfare needs and services could be problematic, encroaching on the creative agency of individuals and groups. While the social democratic regime could attend to the needs of family life, such as through parental leave or financial assistance for child rearing, its inclination to “pre-emptively socialise the costs of familyhood”, as Esping-Anderson puts it, could similarly put it in tension with some of the values personhood described above, especially those of John Paul II. Perhaps most importantly, the social solidarity emphasised repeatedly among the four thinkers, as a foundation and outworking of the agential, relational and gift-oriented nature of the person, was better realised in free association with one another than directly orchestrated by (and for) the state. The social democratic state had appeal but was by no means adequate.

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Finally, there is a similar balance struck with regard to the ‘conservative’ or ‘state-corporatist’ and the extent to which it honours multi-dimensional personhood. On the affirmative side, all four thinkers advocate a system to which citizens contribute, fostering a sense of responsibility for oneself and the wider public good. Moreover, each sought to afford maximal space for non-state actors in the provision of welfare, identifying in the state the duty to secure the material and the associational infrastructure by means of which persons grow and mature through communication, imagination and self-giving. That noted, and again moving to a critical register, the ‘conservative’ regime’s emphasis on encouraging traditional family structures as the basis for welfare resonated strongly only with John Paul II’s vision.

In short, the issue is not that Esping-Andersen’s welfare regimes fail to resonate with the thinking of Temple *et al*, so much as that no one of regimes satisfactorily captures the breadth of that thinking. As illustrated by John Paul II’s linguistic tergiversations over the term ‘capitalism’, or Rowan Williams’ generally reflective, reserved and apophatic approach to these issues, we should not seek to capture their conceptualisation of the welfare state in categories defined by others for different purposes. We can see dimensions of each regime – the ‘agency’ of the liberal regime, the universal provision of the social democratic one, and the concern for localised forms of solidarity of the ‘conservative’ on – capture certain dimension of the theological anthropology. But no regime captures them all.

The result of this is the foreclosure of any attempt to shortcut the hard work of constructing an approach to welfare that honours the theological anthropology of Temple *et al* by simply reaching for an established welfare regime from the shelf. None is sufficient, though each has its merits. Self-evidently this task is a substantial one and, by necessity, technical and collaborative also. All four thinkers, when they address the issue, recognise this; indeed, Temple, in the only one of our sources that comes close to a technical intervention in this issue, is self-consciously apologetic and hesitant in doing so. Clearly, then, articulating the reality of this kind of welfare state is beyond the capacity of this thesis, and this author.

That recognised, this does not mean we cannot at least gesture toward the key elements of any such vision, of a welfare settlement that honours the multi-dimensional personhood discerned in the theological anthropology of Temple *et al*. This is what I will do in the

second half of this chapter, educating and explaining what I judge, in the light of preceding work, to be four critical foundations of the welfare state.

Recasting welfare: multi-dimensional theological anthropology and the dimensions of the welfare state

Welfare, like all significant political issues, is “intrinsically dilemmatic”.¹⁶ That recognised, it should not preclude the attempt to gestured towards a concrete and practicable welfare system that seeks to honour and serve the multi-dimensional, developmental and mutually-balancing theological anthropology of personhood outlined in this thesis.

This rich conception of the person orients us towards a welfare state which (a) provides an adequate level of material comfort and security; (b) fosters a sense of agency among citizens; (c) encourages patterns and practices of responsible belonging; (d) fosters a sense of responsibility to others; (e) facilitates and enables the development of shared projects of mutual wellbeing; (f) allows and encourages experimentation in the provision of welfare; (g) generates the opportunity for persons to give to one another and to local, common goods; and (h) monitors and evaluates structures and ethos of welfare provision without falling into worst sins of new public management (e.g. elevating efficiency over humane care).

This is a long, but by no means exhaustive, list, and we should not expect welfare policy equivalents for each factor. There is no straightforward link between a dimension of theological anthropology, an aspect of the welfare state, and a policy by means of which it might be implemented (though in this regard, this is no different from any political theory). Rather, each of these elements draws on the range theological anthropology dimensions highlighted – created, material, agential, sinful, relational, transcendent, creative, and oriented to, and fulfilled by gift – and each might be worked through in a number of ways.

The multi-dimensional welfare state that I outline below, building on the multi-dimensional theological anthropology educed from Temple *et al*, is structured around four pillars, which I have entitled the *foundation* for welfare, the *funding* of welfare, the *structure* of welfare, and the *ethos* of welfare. The complex, shifting and inherently dilemmatic nature of welfare provision means that any such structuring is inescapably open to debate. However, I believe that this four-fold division not only encompasses the breadth of

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theological anthropology evidenced above, but also some key elements in the structuring, payment and provision of contemporary welfare.

The foundation of welfare: paid work and agency

Work may not be the obvious place to start when thinking about the welfare state, if only because, in common perception, one is the antithesis of the other: you need welfare support precisely because you are not in paid work. It is called *unemployment* benefit and *pension* provision for a reason. This is wrong, however, for several reasons.

Work was at heart of Beveridge plan, in the form of unemployment benefit and assistance, and it remains central to welfare spending today, although, as we shall see, for less happy reasons. More pertinently, given the focus of this thesis, all four thinkers (although Williams least prominently) recognise work as foundational for human flourishing, in the way it honours (or, at least has the capacity to honour) the material, self-determining, relational, and creative dimensions of the human person.

Temple, particularly via the influence of *Men without work*, acknowledged how work provided for most people “the pattern within which their lives are lived”, and that when this pattern was lost, lives, families and communities came apart. Maritain identified ‘man’ as being “*homo faber* before ... *homo sapiens*”, writing that it is essential that human work be “useful” as well as simply available.”¹⁷ John Paul II was most focused on the significance of work arguing that the state’s principal welfare function lay in its encouragement and regulation of a market economy that respected the person’s primacy, agency, dignity, and capacity to realise himself through the “free gift of self”.

This caveat is essential as an emphasis on work can readily but illegitimately lead to the policies, of the kind familiar in liberal welfare regimes, that seek to secure welfare almost solely through employment, without paying due attention to the repercussions this can have on persons, and indeed on the welfare state itself. The answer to welfare among our four thinkers is, in the first instance, paid work but *not* paid work at any cost.

The current problem with work in the UK welfare system illustrates this well, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), among many others, showing how *in-work* poverty is now one of the biggest claims on the welfare budget.¹⁸ In effect, the benefit system has mitigated what would otherwise have been a very significant increase in economic inequality through substantial cash transfer to those already in employment. In the words of Paul Johnson, Director of the IFS, “a system originally designed largely to support those out of

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work for a limited period has become one that supports the low-paid and the sick and disabled for long stretches of their lives.”¹⁹

In light of this, a theological vision of the welfare state needs to do more than simply facilitate paid employment, and while it is possible to parse its exact role here in various ways, I would, drawing on the theological anthropology and its implications of the four thinkers, emphasise four particular duties in this role.

First, the state needs to help create the economic conditions for employment. This means having not simply economic growth but also the reduction of unemployment as a key policy objective. At the same time, this is not the same as increasing levels of employment at any cost. It should be perfectly appropriate for people at certain stages of life, particularly those around early family years, *not* to be in paid employment. This could involve such policies as the incentivisation of new business ventures (contrary to Temple’s recommendation) through, for example, the minimisation of business rents on new enterprises; the provision of appropriate communication, transport and legal infrastructure for new businesses; selective intervention to discourage or dismantle monopolies and to ensure fair competition; and the willingness to step in and support business activities in, what John Paul II terms, “moments of crisis”.

Second, the state needs to help people into these new employment activities. This is both a structural and a cultural issue. With regard to the former, it involves reducing disincentives to employment, such as is the intention of the taper rate with Universal Credit, which is not only intended to simplify the benefit system but to make the transition (back) to work more remunerative than it had been. (Whether the monthly payments system of Universal Credits, intended to imitate the salary patterns of employed work to the same effect, is equally sensible, given the widely-reported hardships it has generated, is more debateable).

At a cultural level, it also means changing the approach to helping people into work. It is a sobering fact that two-thirds of people in any Job Centre are going round again for a second, third (or more) time. In other words, the system has a 66% failure rate.²⁰ The funding – but not necessarily delivery – of comprehensive back-to-work support and broader work coaching is essential here. Some think tanks have proposed the introduction of competition in this area (such as “by rewarding a range of different providers for offering more personalised support to those furthest from the labour market”²¹) although there is the danger that this simply adopts the approach of the ‘liberal’ regime in a

different way (believing that creating a market for a service, in this case for employment itself, best serves human personhood). Rather, there are other innovative methods, which draw on communal and experimental approaches and are discussed below in the section on ethos of welfare, which may be better suited to this challenge.

Third, the state has a responsibility to ensure that work pays adequately, honours human personhood, and serves to support family relationships rather than undermine them. This is a notoriously difficult issue, which has vexed policy makers for much longer than welfare states have been in existence. Presently in the UK, the Low Pay Commission is required to offer recommendations to governments, on the basis of consultation, concerning the level of the national minimum wage, which rose to £8.21 on 1 April 2019 (although less for those under the age of 25). At the same time, the Living Wage Foundation campaigns for a Real Living Wage (already voluntarily paid by 5,000 UK employers), which presently stands at £10.55 in London and £9 for the rest of the country.²²

Temple *et al* were agreed on the need for wages that honoured personhood, though John Paul II was clearest about the necessity of what he called a “family wage”, namely “a single salary given to the head of the family for his work, sufficient for the needs of the family without the other spouse having to take up gainful employment outside the home”.²³ This policy, let alone the manner of its formulation, is unlikely to win many advocates in 21st century Britain, failing to recognise the validity of paid employment for women or indeed the scarcity of jobs that could pay a family wage.

Nevertheless, the precise formulation aside, the idea that a national (or living) wage needs to take account the immediate relational responsibilities of the employee is surely right, not least given that 70 per cent of the 4.1 million children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one person works.²⁴ Child poverty is emphatically not an issue *only* of poorly remunerated work.²⁵ However, poorly paid work can undermine precisely the ‘subjective’ benefits of work that John Paul II (and others) emphasise if it fails to recognise that the needs of the employee are relational as well as material.

Moreover, it is important to note that honouring the ‘relational’ anthropology here has implications beyond simply remuneration. Temple *et al* (but again, particularly, John Paul II) contend that the responsibility of the state to recognise and protect the person within a market economy goes beyond the right to a just wage, and includes responsibility for working patterns and conditions. As with the question of remuneration, this was not

necessarily a direct role. Indeed, by definition, except when the state was a direct employer, it could not be. Rather, the state's role was to ensure that the relationship between employer and employee was just, in the sense that it recognised and respected the personhood of both parties. Thus, it meant securing, through legislation and regulation, “humane” working hours and a working environment, adequate free-time, the right to unionise, to unemployment insurance, ill-health benefits, and protection against other “forms of exploitation”. Such issues have become particularly acute of late with the rise of an unregulated, insecure and unremunerative ‘gig economy’.

Fourth, and finally, as part of honouring the agency, creativity and relationality of the person, the state needs to encourage forms of business ownership that give workers a participatory stake in the business itself, or at least facilitate the work of unions as an active voice in the operation of a business. This more ‘co-operative’ approach was discernible in each of our four thinkers.²⁶

Such an approach to work is not a fully-fledged alternative to other forms of business ownership and none of the four thinkers, except perhaps Temple in his earliest writings, implied it was a replacement for capitalism. (Nor should it be confused with a ‘mutual’ approach to the delivery of welfare, which is discussed below) Rather, the idea behind it is the desire to generate structures (and cultures) of work that respond to and facilitate the mutual and relational dimensions of the human person, rather than simply viewing work as enabling and encouraging the agency and responsibility of the person.

Whether it is through the freedom to organise, unionise, or negotiate contracts, pay increases and working conditions; or through the growth in co-operative ventures that extends the (opportunity for) ownership and management of an enterprise to its employees; or, as Williams mentioned, through an increased role of “professional and self-regulated bodies” such as professional institutions, associations, ‘guilds’, the point here, as with earlier elements within the dimension of work, is to encourage structures and cultures of work that honour as many dimensions of human personhood as possible, rather than simply seeing work as the foundation of welfare in a narrowly material or agency-enabling way.

The funding of welfare: participation and contribution

The technocratic, complex and highly political question of how, and how far, the welfare state should be funded makes it apparently unpromising fare for a theo-anthropological

critique.²⁷ If any area of this debate merits the remark of John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Social Science in 1994 – “the Church...has [no] technical solutions to offer” – it might seem to be this.²⁸

And yet, the nature of funding, or more precisely the connection between the ways in which welfare funds are raised and spent, is not only important but lends itself to this analysis. The welfare state, according to Temple *et al*, needs to recognise and foster citizens’ agency, responsibility and mutuality just as much as it is responsible ultimately for their material security. Accordingly, several of them registered the concern that the state was in danger of supervening on the agency of individuals and groups, through the direct funding and delivery of social services. A welfare state in which the connection between what a citizen contributes to the system (as well, of course, as what they contribute to more local common goods) and what they might receive from it is broken, is one that to some extent disembeds the person from his or her wider context. It divorces the citizen as tax-payer from the citizen as welfare-recipient, separates a person’s inherent capacity and responsibility to contribute from her inherent material and relational need and vulnerability. In short, it divides those who contribute from those who need – ultimately, of course, the same person – thereby undermining the willingness of the former to help the latter.

In the light of this, and in particular of his concerns not to undermine responsibility and the sense of participating in a mutual endeavour, it is not irrelevant or incidental that Beveridge’s report argued for, and highlighted in its title, the funding mechanism of, *Social Insurance*. His was a system in which, in theory at least, there was some connection between that which people contributed to the system, and that which they were able to draw from it in a time of need.

Since Beveridge’s time, however, the level of ‘contributory benefits’, i.e. non-means tested benefits that are received depending on whether the claimant (or sometimes the claimant’s partner) has paid or been credited with enough national insurance contributions,²⁹ has shrunk considerably. Over the same period, the level of non-contributory, means-tested benefits, i.e. those for which receipt is *inversely* correlated to the level of savings and income of the claimant – the more you have saved, the lower the likelihood and level of receipt – has risen significantly.³⁰

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This rebalancing has generated a number of challenges, of which Frank Field has been a particularly vocal and vigorous critic. Benefits that are non-contributory and means tested, he wrote in his IEA pamphlet *Stakeholder Welfare*, “are the cancer within the welfare state... overwhelming the honesty and dignity of recipients in almost equal proportions.”³¹ Specifically, he charges them with crippling initiative, penalising savings and taxing honesty.³² The severity of such criticism is what one would expect from someone whose underpinning anthropology orients him absolutely to the vision of a welfare state that should be based on and encourage, in his own words from the same publication, “character... self-improvement... self-interest... [and] good behaviour.”³³ Nonetheless, his criticisms are worth bearing in mind, even as we are approaching the question of welfare from more multi-dimensional anthropological perspective.

These problems, and this change in welfare funding, combined with the fact that, uniquely among Western nations, the UK relies overwhelmingly on the central state raising taxes to pay for welfare, having radically reduced local tax-raising powers (while also largely retaining centralised tax powers as it devolved legislative and administrative powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Island) means that there is a significant perceived disconnect between how the welfare state is funded and how and where welfare benefits are distributed.³⁴ The raising of welfare funding is, in essence, an unprecedentedly long way from people’s immediate (and local) contexts or the reality of their contributions.

This may not be an issue for some analysts.³⁵ However, the anthropological approach we have adopted suggests that how a welfare state is funded is itself highly relevant, fostering or ignoring certain dimensions of personhood. Frank Field has been a particularly vigorous critic of the funding direction taken by the post-war welfare state and spent much of the 1990s putting forward a detailed proposal for a wholly insurance-based system of welfare, along the lines of mutual aid societies of nineteenth century but adapted to incorporate the “the inclusiveness which was the central object of the post-war reforms”.³⁶ This was, in effect, a stakeholder national insurance scheme in which national mutual aid organisations, would be owned by contributors rather than by private concerns, eschewing shareholders and dividends, ploughing surpluses back into the organisation through lower premiums or more generous benefits. It was, in short, a system that sought to reintroduce Beveridge’s principles for the 21st century.

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This whole system was predicated on Field's anthropology and his according insistence that "welfare should aim to maximise self-improvement... work, savings and honesty must be rewarded rather than...punished."³⁷ In that way, although it paid proper attention to the personal agency and responsibility, it failed to attend the fundamentally relational aspect of the person.

In a very different vein is the option, which has gained momentum of late, of a form of Universal or Basic Income. Precise details of this vary, but the principle is based on the idea that every citizen in the country should get a guaranteed minimum income, sweeping aside the complexity of the benefits system, and providing people with 'enough' to live on. What 'enough' is, if course, a highly-contentious concept, which, in the light of the work of Plant and Anscombe discussed in the introductory chapter, cannot be judged without drawing on the nature and ends of the person for whom it is said to be enough. The discussion around UBI is, therefore, open to the anthropological considerations discussed in this thesis.³⁸

However, the very nature of this funding system, while recognising the person's material security and comfort, entirely ignores the anthropological dimensions of relationality and responsibility. Citizens' income essentially treats citizens simply as passive recipients, whose contribution to, or behaviour in the light of, welfare provision is severed entirely from their receipt of it. In effect, UBI suffers from the same problems as a predominantly insurance-based system – elevating certain dimensions of personhood clearly ahead of others – albeit reversing which ones.

A more subtle and more practical approach – and one, I would argue, that pays greater attention to the range of dimensions of personhood outlined in this thesis – is captured by the Dilnot Commission into Social Care, which was published in 2011.³⁹ This sought to establish a *partial* link between individuals' contributions to, and receipt of, social care, by enforcing contributions but capping them at somewhere between £25,000 and £50,000 in total, while also raising the means-tested threshold (above which people are liable for their full care costs) from £23,250 to £100,000, but allowing all who entered adulthood with a care and support need to be eligible for free state support immediately (i.e. no means test).

In the dimensions of personhood that this thesis has elicited, such an approach maintains a commitment to the material welfare of all citizens (e.g. by insisting on the full eligibility of those with serious support needs, while also stepping in to cover the extreme costs that can accrue to those who develop serious, long-term needs). However, it also invites the

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participation of those who can contribute to care costs, reconnecting the dimension of personal responsibility and agency, with a commitment to the relational and mutual dimension in collective provision.

Demographic data strongly suggest that the funding of the welfare state is going to remain a pressing issue for years to come. But it has always been one, at least from 1951 when Aneurin Bevan resigned from the Labour Government at the prospect of prescription charges, which were introduced by the new Conservative government the following year. It is telling that the Dilnot Commission imitates the very principle of prescription charges, in requiring a personal contribution as a way of off-setting costs and connecting individual with collective responsibility.⁴⁰ The idea of that partial connection offers a balanced and workable way of attending to the various different dimensions of personhood that I have been arguing should underlie the welfare state.

The structure of welfare: association and mutualisation

In his analysis of Christian democracy and the welfare state, Kees van Kersbergen argued that “Christian democracy and social democracy are well matched in terms of social spending.” The difference, he observed, is “more about method than about substance.”⁴¹ This is entirely of a piece with Esping-Anderson’s work on the difference between welfare regimes transcending mere spending levels, and leads us to a third dimension of the welfare state, in as far as it reminds us that however, and to what extent, the welfare state is funded (see previous section), the differing structures by means of which welfare services can be delivered is an essential component. (The closely linked question of the *ethos* of that welfare ‘delivery’ is explored in the following section).

Here, Temple *et al* speak with close to one voice, in their – albeit unsystematic – advocacy of a welfare state that seeks to recognise and encourage the responsible, relational, creative and gift-oriented nature of the person by means of fostering, and working with, a rich, devolved, ecology of welfare provision delivered through associational activity. Welfare ideally should not be something done to or for people, but the *process* and *consequence* of persons recognising their shared material vulnerability and need, their shared responsibility to respond appropriately, and their unique creative and gift-oriented abilities in doing so.

For all that there were differences of opinion concerning how far the state’s responsibility for guaranteeing the welfare of its citizens should translate into direct intervention and

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indeed delivery of service, all four thinkers tend towards a vision of the state that permits, enables, encourages, resources, supports, and regulates as wide a range of intermediate bodies as possible to deliver welfare services, creating and sustaining the right conditions for “first-level communities” to honour the multi-dimensional personhood not only of those in need but also of those – ultimately the same people – in a position to help them.

This is an alternative to the understanding of welfare – “welfarism” in Williams’ terminology – in which one group of persons are reduced to being “recipients or clients” of another, “frozen in the attitude of supplicants”, rather than ever attaining the status of “fellow-agents with those administering aid.” (As we shall note below, this is even more of an issue when we come to talk of the ethos of welfare). But, equally importantly, it is not the same as straightforwardly voluntarising welfare, or of devolving welfare provision to a marketplace that enables citizens (*qua* consumers) to choose between providers, in the belief that it will naturally improve efficiency and drive up standards. The first of these (voluntarising welfare) risks disregarding the state’s responsibility for its citizens altogether, while the second (marketising welfare) simply turns recipients into consumers, replacing one inadequate uni-dimensional concept of the person with another.

Rather, this approach gestures towards the ‘mutualisation’ of welfare, as it is increasingly known, seeking to locate the ‘provision’ of ‘welfare services’ (the words themselves are too transactional but used for the sake of familiarity) in associations and organisations that are rooted in the context in which they operate and work with relative autonomy from state structures. Mutualising welfare removes its provision from the direct control of central government (which does maintain regulatory and funding roles), and places it in ‘social enterprise’ organisations in which employees exercise an active role in governance and/or ownership, and ‘service users’ (again, the term is familiar but somewhat inappropriate) are involved in the design and delivery of activities.

In reality, the precise definition, and the legal structure, of such ‘public service mutuals’ (PSM) is far from straightforward.⁴² Historically, friendly societies, building societies, co-operatives, housing associations, credit unions, mutual insurers, employee owned mutuals, and community mutuals could all have fallen under a PSM rubric, even if the terminology itself is a recent thing. The UK Cabinet Office places its emphasis on the independence of a mutual from government, and the roles played by employees, though the nature of these can vary. However, its definition differs subtly from the more demanding one of Mutuo, an

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organisation dedicated to promoting all types of co-operative and mutual (including business mutuals), which sees mutuals as “organizations that are owned by, and run for the benefit of, their current and future members”.⁴³ Other definitions abound.⁴⁴

Such definitional issues aside, public service mutuals are intended to include stakeholders in the development of services; to facilitate ‘co-production’, with professionals working alongside service users and their communities in the design and delivery of services (rather than simply ‘consulting’ with or doing it for them); to place restrictions on ownership rights designed to protect the members’ interests; to develop forms of internal accountability (to members) that offers a ‘first-line’ form of scrutiny and alleviate state’s role of inspection; and to offer the benefits of voluntarism (local knowledge, personal commitment, moral energy, etc.) while protecting against variability of service delivery quality and funding unpredictability that can often come with such voluntarism. Moreover, at least according to Julian Le Grand, in his chapter on PSMs in the ResPublica report on *Making it Mutual*, mutualisation also offers greater professional freedom, allowing people to use their knowledge and expertise to better effect, to innovate more freely, to take decisions (and responsibility for them), and to minimise the constraints placed upon them by “orders and directives from others more distant and less knowledgeable than themselves.”⁴⁵

The studies analysed in the Mutuals Taskforce’s report *Our Mutual Friends* did show that mutuals had lower levels of absenteeism and staff turnover (than comparable non-employee-owned organisations), lower production costs and (generally) higher productivity, while delivering greater customer satisfaction, paying on average higher wages, and showing themselves to be innovative, profitable and resilient to changes in the economic climate.⁴⁶ Such research is supported elsewhere although, as Myers and Maddocks note, much of this research into benefits of employee-owned mutuals concentrates on private sector commercial activity rather than delivery of public services.⁴⁷

However accurate and relevant these studies are for the mutualisation of public services, the principle of mutualisation is clearly workable, seemingly sustainable, and offers a fuller working out of the theological anthropological principles of Temple *et al* than is offered in their own, somewhat hesitant and piecemeal articulations on the subject. It finds favour in John Milbank and Adrian Pabst’s *The Politics of Virtue*, which argues that the healthcare system should be run as a mutual trust accountable to its members with “a much greater

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role for health care cooperatives that are co-owned by patients or citizens”, rather than those that are simply partners of professionals, like GP surgeries.⁴⁸ It is a centrepiece of the work of ResPublica, set up by another of Milbank’s pupils, Philip Blond, and drawing on similar ‘post-liberal’ ideas, as exemplified by their publication *Making it Mutual*.⁴⁹

Similar ideas are to be found in Stefano Zamagni’s articulation of a ‘civil-welfare’ model, which places civil society organizations as “active partners” in the process of developing interventions and adopting of “strategic choices”. In practice, Zamagni argues, this means going beyond recognizing the “juridical subjectivity” of such organizations to include “economic subjectivity”, providing them with financial independence so that each has “the capacity to realize its own program and to achieve its own objectives without depending, in a constraining way, on either the government or for-profit firms.”⁵⁰ This vision is also consonant with, if less radical than, Paul Hirst’s decentralised and pluralistic vision of an “associational” and “confederal” Welfare State, in *Associative Democracy*, which seeks to provide – in his phrase – “thick welfare [and] thin collectivism” by devolving the provision of public welfare to voluntary self-governing associations while simultaneously enabling such associations to obtain public funds to provide such services for their members.”⁵¹

A move towards the mutualisation of welfare services is no panacea for whatever ails the welfare state, any more than re-introducing a more significant contributory element would be. Indeed, just as the welfare state seems unlikely, in the present political climate, to be converted to a predominantly contributory system, so public services mutuals are unlikely to dominate the structure of welfare provision. The pressures towards centralisation and direct political accountability, which Temple registered in the 1930s, remain too great. However, to revert to the driving argument of this thesis, the nature of the welfare state transcends questions of mere size and funding, and incorporates key ideas of structure and design which themselves reflect, embody, and advance anthropological preconceptions. The mutualisation of welfare provision recognises and advances (elements of) the multi-dimensional personhood that is core to Christian theological anthropology, and has a strong call to be a core element of any settlement that honours that personhood.

The ethos of welfare: creativity and gift

Closely linked to the question of the delivery of welfare, is the ethos of welfare, the way in which welfare is delivered, as much as by whom. Indeed, one of the reasons for favouring a more mutualised approach to welfare provision is the belief that it catalyses an ethos of

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creative, shared responsibility. “Professional and self-regulated bodies”, like associations, guilds, and unions, according to Williams, can help generate an “ethos of ‘service’”.⁵²

Whether or not there is a fixed (or even causal) link between the delivery structure and the ethos of welfare, there is a powerful summons in Temple *et al* towards an ethos of mutual, creative, relational, gift-oriented welfare, irrespective of the form and structure of its delivery. The unemployed have no money to give, Temple reasoned in the light of *Men without Work*, “but *they have themselves to give.*” “It is not possible to fulfil our duty towards [man],” John Paul wrote in *Memory and Identity*, “except by loving him.”⁵³

Such language – of relationality and creativity, let alone love and gift – has been largely alien to political discussions of welfare, sounding too soft, idealistic, and naïve to be of any practical consequence. It need not be, however. Indeed, there are increasing examples of how approaches to welfare that take the relational, creative, gift-oriented – and even transcendent – dimensions of the human seriously are not only possible, but demonstrably advantageous. We can take each of these dimensions in turn, illustrating their effectiveness through contemporary examples.

Relationality – or rather the lack of it – is built into so much welfare provision, albeit in various different ways. For example, a remarkably high proportion of social workers’ time is spent on administration (e.g. recording, tracking, monitoring, referring, assessing, and meeting with other agencies) rather than in actual contact with ‘clients’ themselves.⁵⁴ The professionalization of welfare provision connects ‘clients’ with social workers (in as far as it actually does) but often inadvertently bypasses more informal sources of advice, opportunity and help, such as may be available in the lived contexts of ‘clients’, such as among local community groups and businesses. Healthcare treatment is “designed around the lone individual”, as opposed to seeing her as a person embedded in precisely the kind of relationships that can help her psychologically, emotionally and physically heal. In the words of Hilary Cottam, whose reflections on a decade of experiments in welfare are gathered together in her book *Radical Help*, “relationships are never designed into any of our solutions.”⁵⁵

They can be, however, as various social enterprises (including some of Cottam’s) have shown. Cottam’s programme of ‘intervention’ in troubled family lives, entitled ‘Life’, attempted to invert the proportion of time social workers spent with families, with 80% of her team’s time in their company, and 20% on bureaucracy. Her health programme,

‘Wellogram’, sought not to medicate patients, but to help them live with their conditions alongside others, on the basis that, unlike in Beveridge’s day, a substantial proportion of the population live with long-term conditions such as obesity, depression, stress, diabetes, high blood pressure, and the like, for which there are no obvious medical cure, but the experience of which is alleviated and often improved by close relationships.⁵⁶ ‘Backr’, the experiment aimed at getting people into work, was predicated on the recognition that a significant number of jobs – perhaps even a majority – are found through personal connections and word of mouth, rather than formal JobCentre mechanisms, and that therefore building connections and relationships is the critical element in gaining the unemployed work placements, experience and finally positions.⁵⁷

This emphasis on relationality was to some degree enabled by the attention paid to the second anthropological dimension highlighted above, namely creativity. Cottam herself repeatedly uses the word ‘experiment’ to describe her welfare programmes, which self-consciously eschewed existing and familiar plans in favour of novel and adaptable approaches. ‘Life’ was determined not to ‘fix’ dysfunctional families – “this just wasn’t people coming in and doing things to us” as one ‘client’ put it – but to listen to their vision, draw on their capacity, and to “help me to help myself make things better and live my life”.⁵⁸ ‘Backr’ started by focusing simply on friendship and activities, organising exercise groups in the park as a way of intentionally generating a mixed social gathering, initiating new relationships, developing habits of communication and widening the relational net in which people operated.⁵⁹ Similar approaches are adopted by Lifeline Community Resources, a local collaborative project that, in its own words, seeks to “grows creative solutions to local issues – solutions provided ‘By the community, for the community’”.⁶⁰ By integrating service users into the design and implementation of the programme, it drew on their particular and local knowledge, and afforded them a sense of genuine agency, which meant that programmes were necessarily flexible and different.

This reliance on creativity and willingness to embrace experiment was (and is), it should be emphasised, a risky affair, and at least one of Cottam’s experiments in relational welfare failed. The ‘Loops’ programme, an intervention in adolescent care, so called because it was based on “cycles of experimentation” in which “we expected young people to go round and round again, broadening and deepening their experiences and relationships” ultimately failed.⁶¹ The experiment was targeted not on specific problems like school exclusion, teenage pregnancy, or drug use, but on building connections between troubled young

people and young workers, to show possibilities of the latter to the former.⁶² Consciously based on relations between approximate peers “rather than through the control of traditional management hierarchies” it failed because, although successful with the young people themselves, “potential funders freaked when they saw young people mixing with adults (even though the latter had been DBS checked) and pulled plug.”⁶³ The flip side of creativity is risk and the willingness to risk failure.

The creative and experimental element within these welfare programmes leads to, indeed emphasises, the third anthropological elements mentioned above, namely orientation to gift. Cottam’s experiments drew on the creative agency of all involved, predicated on the strong conviction that everyone had something to contribute to the process. Time and again, the experiments worked on the principle of helping people exercise their agency for themselves and others. ‘Life’ eschewed all attempts at “managing problems” and instead sought to “support families to grow their own capabilities.”⁶⁴ The result was a self-fulfilling process: “the more control the families took, the more they changed and the more they dared to raise the bar.”⁶⁵ Wellogram avoided treating people merely as patients, and encouraged them to think of themselves as agents of their own and other people’s physical and mental health. ‘Circle’, a programme designed to help people age well, intentionally “blend[ed] the traditional boundaries of who is helped and who is helping, of what is social and what is practical.”⁶⁶

This recognition that all must contribute and the consequent blurring of giver and recipient has, it should be noted, been elaborated on elsewhere. It has, for example, been noted several times, not least by Jean Vanier himself, that volunteers often joined L’Arche communities on the understanding that they were giving to others only to find that they actually had something very different and important to learn, namely that “the marginalised and despised – ‘the poor’ – have something to give.” As Hans Reinders remarks in his essay, ‘Being with the disabled: Jean Vanier’s Theological Realism’, “the virtuous motives that make people want to be good to others often betray a hidden sense of superiority; they assume for themselves the role of ‘giver’ and assign to the other person the roles of ‘receiver’.” Without this recognition, “true community is impossible.”⁶⁷

The final dimension of the person relevant to the ethos of welfare – transcendence – is even more alien to familiar welfare discourse than the previous three. In one attenuated sense, it is implicit in the idea of recognising and integrating the agency of welfare ‘clients’

in such programmes. Going beyond problem solving, this relational, creative, and participatory approach to welfare is akin to a ‘capabilities approach’ in which the agency, potential and vision of the client to transcend immediate circumstance was essential. This, however, remains some way from the transcendent dimension of personhood implicit (or explicit in John Paul II’s case) in the four thinkers in this thesis, in the sense of being open to a more directly transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit.

And yet, this should not be as entirely alien to formulations of a welfare state as it is, particularly if those formulations are attentive to the multi-dimensional personhood here discussed. Professor George Vaillant’s analysis of the uniquely long-running longitudinal Grant study (of the adult development of Harvard students from the class of 1939-44) in parallel with the Glueck study (of a matching cohort drawn from Boston inner-city ‘underclass’) is instructive in this regard. It reported, among many other things, that when viewed beyond a five-year window, almost all health interventions and short-term talking remedies (such as cognitive behaviour therapy) have only short-term limited effects, or indeed none at all. In contrast, Vaillant observed, the two factors that do make a *long-term* difference are interventions on improving relationships and those that reach into the more spiritual side of our lives, Vaillant citing the success of Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step process as an example of the latter.⁶⁸

In reality, there is overwhelming evidence for the positive role of religious belief, practice and association in securing positive mental and physical health, and subjective well-being across the world,⁶⁹ which further underlines the possibility of integrating the transcendent dimension of human personhood into our consideration of the ethos of welfare. That this can be done badly does not need saying; that it can be, and is, done well, does. The Christian debt advice centre CAP (Christians Against Poverty) is open, from the outset, about the spiritual support it offers its clients, praying with and for them, even as it restructures their debts and invites them into a wider community. This does not make it evangelistic (let alone proselytising): CAP is explicitly cautious in their spiritual engagement with vulnerable ‘clients’ and in fact only 4 per cent of people they deal with become Christian.⁷⁰ But it remains an essential component in what is an extremely successful welfare provider, albeit one with no connections to the state.⁷¹

Conclusion: from welfare state to personal state

Sir Andrew Dilnot, whose Commission on Social Care is referenced above (and who commented on an earlier draft of this chapter) does not like the term ‘welfare state’. He believes that the phrase narrowly implies “redistributive action that is helping identifiable needy groups”, and in the process therefore giving an unhelpful signal of what ‘welfare’ *should* be. In its stead, he prefers the phrase “collective provision”, although he acknowledges that this lacks the “historical resonance” and pithy memorability of the original phrase.⁷²

Such linguistic tergiversations are easily dismissed as an alternative to genuine action, rather than a spur to it. Moreover, and particularly in today’s political climate, they are liable to provoke fears of a surreptitious dismantling of the post-war state. Nevertheless, much as John Paul II’s equivocations over ‘capitalism’ helped frame and clarify his understanding of what a free market economy should actually be for – persons, not capital – so venturing other terms for the welfare state – whether “collective provision”, Big Society, or Enabling State, etc. – can help do the same.

The phrase “personal state” is, no doubt, no catchier than Dilnot’s “collective provision”. Moreover, it is apt to be interpreted as a state that is tailored to personal needs – consumerist kind of a state – rather than one that is grounded in the ideas of personhood that I have been discussing in this thesis.

Nevertheless, that recognised, the point of deploying it here is to make a provocation, rather than formally to rebaptise an institution. Just as William Temple reasoned, in *Christianity and the State*, that the “Power-State” derived its legitimacy from its exercise of (military) power, and the “Welfare-State” derived its from its concern for the welfare of its citizens, so a ‘Personal State’ would draw its legitimacy from its attention to human personhood in all its dimensions.

I have argued in this thesis, by drawing on the work of Esping-Anderson, Plant and Deacon that this anthropological approach is a wholly legitimate (indeed necessary) basis for thinking about welfare. And I have demonstrated, by drawing on the ideas of Temple, Maritain, John Paul II, and Williams, what this might look like. A multi-dimensional Christian theological anthropology (at least one drawn from these four thinkers) conceptualises the human as created, material, agential, sinful, relational, transcendent,

creative, and oriented to, and fulfilled by gift, and seeks to fashion a state that recognises and fosters these ‘personal’ dimensions.

In particular, vis-à-vis the provision of welfare, I have argued that the personal state would place work at the heart of its welfare programme; creating economic conditions for maximal employment; reducing disincentives, and offering opportunities and programmes for return to the labour market; and regulating the security, conditions, temporal demands, and remuneration of employment so as to protect the material, agential and relational dimensions of the person.

A personal state should seek to establish a *partial* link between individuals’ contributions to, and receipt of, social care, thereby (re)connecting the dimension of personal responsibility and agency, with a commitment to the relational and mutual dimension in collective provision. It should place a premium on association and mutualisation when it comes to the delivery of welfare encouraging, resourcing and regulating a range of intermediate bodies, particularly ‘mutuals’, as vehicles for welfare services. It should attend to the reality of human sin not by presupposing a certain level of selfishness in human motivation or behaviour, but by recognising the need for all bodies and agents operating in the provision of welfare – whether through state, market, or civil society – to come under appropriate scrutiny and regulation. And it should seek to introduce space for human relationality, creativity, orientation to and for gift, and even transcendence in the design, delivery and ethos of welfare services, being willing to draw and experiment with local, embedded, community knowledge and networks in the process.

Such a “personal” approach to welfare may not amount to a new or distinctive welfare ‘regime’, and many of these ideas will resonate with existing and proposed welfare solutions from a wide range of ideological schools. But that is not a problem. Indeed, such resonances with other approaches to welfare should make the ideas inherent in a ‘personal’ state *more* rather than *less* likely to be acceptable to those tasked with the never-ended job of reforming the welfare state.

¹ Bruni and Zamagni (2016), p. 23, 76.

² Bretherton (2015), pp. 267–273.

³ Plant (1980), p. 244.

⁴ Most noticeably absent in Rowan Williams, who eschews the language of sin almost totally, although he does use it a little in his early book, *The Truce of God* (Williams (1983) p. 41). That said, although such *language* is absent, Williams is certainly alert to the human inclination to refuse createdness, to try and assert total control, and to refuse to recognise the goods and vulnerabilities of others and of wider creation in the process.

⁵ Williams (2007b)

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⁶ Mau (2004), pp. 53–74.

⁷ Torry (2016)

⁸ Williams (1999), p. 237.

⁹ Arts and Gelissen in Castles (2012), p. 571.

¹⁰ Arts and Gelissen in Castles (2012), pp. 575–76)

¹¹ I am grateful to Jonathan Boston for emphasising this point to me, and for his extensive comments on my final chapter.

¹² Thatcher (1977) and Thatcher (1978)

¹³ For example, Maritain (1943), pp. 90–91.

¹⁴ Maritain (1936), p. 224.

¹⁵ Williams (2002)

¹⁶ Brown (2016), para. 41

¹⁷ Maritain (1940), p. 138.

¹⁸ See, for example, IFS (2009)

¹⁹ Johnson (2019)

²⁰ Miscampbell and Porter (2014)

²¹ CSJ (2014)

²² This is calculated according to what the Foundation believes is necessary to live on according to current cost household services and good. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>

²³ *Laborem exercens* #19

²⁴ ‘Households below average income: 1994/95 to 2017/18’; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201718> (accessed 11 June 2019)

²⁵ According to the Department of Work and Pensions, poverty levels for children growing up in lone parent families are almost twice as high as for children living in couple families. CSJ (2017)

²⁶ See Krinks (2016), pp.282–295 for Temple; Maritain (1951), p. 21 for Maritain; *Laborem exercens*, #14 for John Paul II, and Williams, R. (2009b) for Williams.

²⁷ For an overview of the benefits system, which still stretches to 94 pages, Hood and Keiller (2016)

²⁸ John Paul II (PASS, 1994), #6

²⁹ Non-means tested, although if you have income in the form of earnings or pension payments the level of benefit may be affected

³⁰ IFS (2019)

³¹ Field (1996), p. 9.

³² Field (1996), p. 16.

³³ Field (1996), p. 9.

³⁴ See Alcock *et al* (2016), p. 285

³⁵ See Johnson (2012)

³⁶ Field (1996), p.10.

³⁷ Field (1996), p. 9.

³⁸ See, for example, Torry (2018), Torry (2016), Standing (2017)

³⁹ Dilnot (2011)

⁴⁰ It also echoes in in that a number of people, such as school age children, or those in receipt of National Assistance were exempt from the charges. I am grateful to Sir Andrew Dilnot for suggesting this comparison and for his time in talking me through his Commission, report and what happened – or didn’t happen – after its publication.

⁴¹ van Kersbergen (1995), p. 3, 231.

⁴² A PSM can be company limited by shares or guarantee, a community benefit society, or a charitable and community interest company.

⁴³ www.mutuo.coop

⁴⁴ See the Employee Ownership Association (<https://employeeownership.co.uk/>), the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (<https://www.councils.coop/>), Myers and Maddocks (2016), pp. 55–60

⁴⁵ Julian (2017), pp. 132–135

⁴⁶ See Cabinet Office (2011) and, more generally, the work of the Mutuels Taskforce which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/mutuals-taskforce>

⁴⁷ Birchall and Ketilson (2009), Lampel *et al* (2012)

⁴⁸ Milbank and Pabst (2016), p. 161–62.

⁴⁹ See Blond (2010), esp. chapters 9 and 10

⁵⁰ Zamagni, ‘Reciprocity’, p. 24

⁵¹ See Hirst (1994), pp. 167–202

⁵² Williams (2012c)

⁵³ John Paul II (2005), p. 150

⁵⁴ Cottam (2018), p. 59.

⁵⁵ Cottam (2018), p. 160.

⁵⁶ Cottam (2018), p. 140.

⁵⁷ Cottam (2018), p. 117.

⁵⁸ Cottam (2018), pp. 68-69.

⁵⁹ Cottam (2018), p. 124.

⁶⁰ <http://communityresources.co.uk/#about>

⁶¹ Cottam (2018), p. 96.

⁶² Cottam (2018), pp. 98-99.

⁶³ Cottam (2018), pp. 103-05.

⁶⁴ Cottam (2018), p. 63.

⁶⁵ Cottam (2018), p. 66.

⁶⁶ Cottam (2018), p. 189.

⁶⁷ Brock and Swinton (2012.) p. 474.

⁶⁸ Vaillant (2012), chapter 9. See also Vaillant (2005) pp. 431-436

⁶⁹ See Spencer *et al* (2015)

⁷⁰ <https://capuk.org/about-us/the-cap-story/our-faith>

⁷¹ Kirkby (2002)

⁷² In personal communication, though he also made this point in an address to the 2019 Nuffield Trust summit, which can be viewed here: <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/media/matthew-d-ancona-at-summit-2018-what-does-post-truth-mean-for-evidence-based-policy> (accessed 1 November 2019)

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